

**THE UTILITY OF THE ZIMBABWEAN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT:
CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES**

by

EXCELLENT CHIRESHE

submitted in accordance with the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROF H C STEYN

NOVEMBER 2012

DECLARATION

Student number: **4312-162-4**

I declare that

**THE UTILITY OF THE ZIMBABWEAN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT:
CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES**

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

EXCELLENT CHIRESHE

DATE

ABSTRACT

The study investigated Zimbabwean Christian and Muslim women who had experienced domestic violence with a view to finding out the extent to which these women used provisions of the Domestic Violence Act of 2006. The study was conducted in urban Masvingo and its surroundings. The methodology applied to the empirical investigation was qualitative and was informed by the phenomenological, feminist and pragmatic theoretical frameworks.

Data was collected, by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews, from 30 participants, 22 Christian and 8 Muslim, who were selected using purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques. In investigating the women's experiences, some questions guided the study. These include: Where and to what extent does a select group of Christian and Muslim women who fall victim to domestic violence normally seek help? How do religious and cultural beliefs and practices influence the response to domestic violence by the abused as well as those to whom they report? To what extent do religious communities prevent selected victims of domestic violence from seeking legal assistance?

Data was analysed by coding responses according to themes. The study revealed that the participants perceived domestic violence as having diverse causes and most of them saw their religion as crucial in addressing their plight. It emerged that a majority of the participants sought help from their religious communities as well as relatives and friends. Mixed responses emanated from these sources of help. The most common response, based largely on religious and cultural beliefs, was to encourage participants to avoid reporting to authorities. It also emerged that most of the participants were not willing to seek help from the police, courts or legal practitioners to seek redress because of the advice they received as well as their own internalised beliefs. Religious, social, and economic factors prevented most participants from appealing to provisions of the Domestic Violence Act.

It was concluded that the Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act had limited usefulness for participants because of religious, social and economic factors. It was recommended that if relevant stakeholders could jointly work together, domestic violence would be alleviated. Recommendations for further research were also made.

Key terms: Domestic violence; feminism; patriarchy, the feminist approach; Zimbabwean women; Christian women; Muslim women; Domestic Violence Act (Zimbabwe); rights of women; gender equality; social justice; women in African Religion; women in African culture; pragmatism.

PREFACE

While I take responsibility for the final form of this thesis, there are many who have shared this study. Writing this thesis has been a long process of many years that tested the patience of all those who shared my experience.

Firstly, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. H C Steyn, my promoter and supporter, who has faithfully and expertly guided my studies. She insisted at all times on a high standard of academic excellence. Her patience, guidance and encouragement enabled me to complete this project. She did not abandon me even after her retirement.

I would also like to thank the library staff at the Unisa Library, Muckleneuk Campus, especially Ms. Elsabe Nelle, subject librarian (Religious Studies) for assisting me to navigate through various databases.

As a recipient of the Unisa bursary, I am indebted to the Directorate of Student Funding.

I would like to acknowledge, with thanks, the contribution of Ms. B. M. Shaw who skilfully edited my thesis.

My thanks go to all my participants, who agreed to offer their time during the interviews.

A critical pillar of support who I cannot fail to mention is my husband, Regis. I learnt from his example how to be a mature academic.

To my children Farai and Tatenda, I say thanks for the moral support. Be blessed.

My appreciation also goes to my relatives, friends and colleagues who in one way or another supported and encouraged me during the course of the study.

I would like to thank my parents who gave me a sound educational base.

Finally, I would like to thank God Almighty who gave me strength to soldier in the face of challenges.

DEDICATION

To my dedicated and supportive husband, Regis
and to my children Farai and Tatenda
who supported me all the way.
may God bless you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Preface	iii
Dedication	iv
PART 1: THE CONTEXT	1
CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Provisions of the Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act (Chapter 5:16)	4
1.3 Terminology	6
1.4 Statement of the problem	7
1.5 The aim of the study	8
1.6 Theoretical framework	8
1.6.1 Phenomenology of religion	9
1.6.1.1 Epoche	9
1.6.1.2 Empathy	10
1.6.1.3 Description	10
1.6.1.4 Eidetic intuition	10
1.6.2 The Feminist Approach	11
1.6.3 Pragmatism	16

1.7	Demarcation of the study	17
1.8	Relevance of the study	17
1.9	Layout of the thesis	18
1.10	Summary	19
CHAPTER 2: ROLE OF WOMEN IN AFRICAN RELIGION AND CULTURE		20
2.1	Introduction	20
2.2	The Essence of African Religion and Culture	21
2.3	Status of women in African Religion	22
2.4	Status of women in African culture	25
2.4.1	African women and the family	26
2.4.1.1	Marriage	26
	Significance of marriage and the family	26
	Polygamy (<i>barika</i>)	27
	Gender role socialisation in the family	28
	Marriage and kinship	29
	Childbearing and children	29
2.4.1.2	<i>Rooru/ lobola</i> and the status of women	31
2.4.1.3	Property rights and inheritance	33
2.4.1.4	Divorce	34
2.4.2	Decision-making in both public and private spheres	35
	Customary law and gender inequality in the family	37

2.4.3	Interface between the status of women in African society and domestic violence	38
2.5	Conclusion	40
CHAPTER 3: STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN CHRISTIANITY		41
3.1	Introduction	41
3.2	Biblical injunctions on the status and role of women	41
3.2.1	The book of Genesis	42
3.2.2	The hierarchical relationship	43
3.2.3	The virtuous wife	44
3.2.4	The household code	45
3.2.4.1.	Ephesians 5:22-25	45
3.2.4.2	Colossians 3:18-19	46
3.2.5	The silent follower	46
3.2.5.1	1 Corinthians 14:33b-35	46
3.2.5.2	1 Timothy 2:11-15	47
3.3	Equal status for women	48
3.3.1	Galatians 3:26-28	48
3.3.2	Acts 2:17-18	49
3.3.3	Luke 10:39-42	49
3.4	Influential historical interpretations	50
3.5	Contemporary interpretations	53
3.5.1	The Church in Africa	53
3.5.1.1	Mainline churches	53
3.5.1.2	African Initiated Churches	55
3.5.2	The history and essence of the Christian feminist movement	56

3.5.2.1	Christian feminist theologians in the West	57
3.5.2.2	Christian feminist theologians in Africa	60
3.6	Conclusion	63
CHAPTER 4: STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN ISLAM		65
4.1	Introduction	65
4.2	Women before the rise of Islam	66
4.3	Equal status for Muslim women in the Quran and in early Islam	67
4.4	Decline in the status of women	68
4.5	The emergence of Islamic feminism	69
4.6	Cardinal issues for consideration	72
4.6.1	The idea of creation	72
4.6.2	Spirituality	73
4.6.3	Marriage and divorce	75
4.6.3.1	Choice of a spouse	75
4.6.3.2	Husband/wife relationship	76
4.6.3.3	Polygamy	80
4.6.3.4	Divorce	81
4.6.4	Education and employment	83
4.6.5	Inheritance, economic and property rights	85
4.6.6	Personal status under Shariah law	87
4.6.7	Seclusion (purdah) and veiling (hijab)	88
4.6.8	Politics	91
4.6.9	Violence against women	93

4.7	Conclusion	95
CHAPTER 5: LITERATURE REVIEW		96
5.1	Introduction	96
5.2	Domestic violence and religion	97
5.2.1	Religion as supportive	97
5.2.1.1	Seeking assistance from religious communities and leaders	97
5.2.1.2	Encouragement to leave abusive relationships	99
5.2.2	Religion as unsupportive	101
5.2.2.1	Religious teachings as contributing to domestic violence	101
5.2.2.2	Blaming the victim and subsequent self-blame	103
5.2.2.3	Encouragement to stay in relationships	105
5.2.2.4	Many religious leaders lack adequate training	111
5.2.2.5	Discouraging victims from seeking secular assistance	112
5.2.3	Religion as both helpful and unhelpful in the face of domestic violence	113
5.2.3.1	Prayer	114
5.2.3.2	Pastoral counselling	115
5.2.3.3	Mixed advice	117
5.3	The collusion of religion and culture in domestic violence	118
5.4	Lack of collaboration between religious and secular institutions	120
5.5	Gaps in the literature	122
5.6	Conclusion	124

PART 2: THE EMPIRICAL PROCESS	126
CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	126
6.1 Introduction	126
6.2 Methodological considerations	126
6.2.1 Personal background	126
6.2.2 Qualitative research	128
6.2.2.1 The phenomenological method	130
6.3 History of the project	133
6.3.1 Unit of analysis	133
6.3.2 Literature survey	133
6.3.3 Selecting participants	134
6.3.4 The in-depth semi-structured interview	137
6.3.5 Analysis of interview data	139
6.3.6 Validation	140
6.4 Personal experience of the fieldwork and interviews	141
6.5 Ethical considerations	142
6.6 Conclusion	143
CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	144
7.1 Introduction	144
7.2 Profile of participants	144
7.2.1 Childhood experiences of domestic violence	147
7.2.2 The importance of religion in the participants' lives	148

7.2.3	The place of women in religion	149
7.2.3.1	The place of women in Christianity	150
	Religious leadership	150
	Mainline churches	150
	Evangelical/Pentecostal churches Evangelical	152
	Zionist/Apostolic churches	153
	Marriage and divorce	153
	Education, employment and property rights	155
	Domestic violence	156
7.2.3.2	The place of women in Islam	156
	Religious leadership	156
	Marriage and divorce	157
	Education and employment	158
	Property rights and inheritance	158
	Domestic violence	159
7.3	Experiences of domestic violence	159
7.3.1	Sources/ antecedents and forms of domestic violence	160
7.3.1.1	The desire to control	160
	Isolation	160
	Curtailing mobility	161
	Behaviour prescriptions	162
	Controlling money	162

7.3.1.2	Extra-marital affairs	162
	Risk of contracting HIV and AIDS	165
7.3.1.3	Accusation of Infidelity	166
	Denial of support for children born during the period of conflict	167
	Accusation of bringing AIDS into the marriage	167
7.3.1.4	<i>Roora/Lobola</i> -related abuse	168
7.3.1.5	Economic abuse	170
	Stringent control of family economic resources	170
	Lack of support for the family	171
	Deprivation of employment opportunities	172
7.3.1.6	The role of alcohol	173
7.3.2	Summary	173
7.4	Responding to violence	175
7.4.1	Reporting to religious leaders and communities	175
7.4.1.1	Responses by religious leaders and laypersons	176
	‘Be submissive to your husband’	176
	‘Pray about the situation’	177
	Biblical verses to comfort and strengthen the abused	178
	Bringing partners for joint counselling	178
	The preservation of marriage	179
	Attributing the violence to the devil	180
	Spiritual therapy by church prophets	180
	Encouragement to leave abusive situations	181

7.4.1.2 Not seeking help from religious communities: Rationale	182
7.4.2 Informing friends and relatives	182
7.4.2.1 Responses of friends and relatives	183
Blaming the victim	183
‘Silence is power’	185
The importance of preserving marriage and family unity	186
Encouragement to leave abusive relationships	187
HIV as a point to consider before deciding to separate from a spouse	187
7.4.3 Reporting to the authorities: making use of the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act	187
7.4.4 Not reporting to the authorities and not making use of the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act: Rationale	189
7.4.4.1 Religious reasons	189
‘Prayer helps’	189
‘Suffering is expected by religious people’	190
Ungodly to report to non-religious authorities	190
Belief in the sanctity of marriage	191
7.4.4.2 Social/cultural reasons	192
Fear of social stigma	192
Fear of losing children	194
Fear of further violence	195
7.4.4.3 Economic reasons	195
7.5 Advice participants would give to other abused women	196

7.6	Implication of findings for the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act	197
7.7	Collusion of culture and religion	198
7.8	Conclusion	201
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		202
8.1	Introduction	202
8.2	Overview of the study	202
8.3	Review of the empirical process	203
8.4	Summary of conclusions	204
8.5	Limitations of the study	215
8.6	Contribution of the study	216
8.7	Recommendations	216
8.7.1	Recommendations for practice	216
8.7.2	Recommendations for further study	217
8.8	Final reflections	218
REFERENCES		219
APPENDICES		
	Appendix A: Interview guide	246
	Appendix B: Profiles of participants	247
	Appendix C: The Domestic Violence Act	249
	Appendix D: Consent form	263
	Appendix E: Introductory letter	265

PART 1: THE CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1 BACKGROUND

The world today is marked by violence which comes in different forms. The concept of violence relates to a range of coercive behaviours aimed at controlling a victim, and includes physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse (Alelhie 2011:63; Nawaz, Nawaz & Majeed 2008:74; Takyi & Mann 2006:61-62; Van Dyke 2005:2; Lutenbacher, Cohen & Mitzel 2003:56; Manetta, Bryant, Cavanaugh & Gange 2003:6; Yoshihama 2002:389; Cooper-White 1996:16). In domestic violence, it is usually women who are the victims, while men are the perpetrators but it should be noted that males can also fall victim to female abusers.

Across the globe, one of the most common forms of violence against women is the abuse of women by their husbands or their intimate male partners. While men can also fall victim at the hands of their female intimate partners (Durfee 2011:316; Lappen 2007:1), domestic violence is in most cases perpetrated by men (Alelhie 2011:35; Reed 2010:22; Yigzaw, Berhane, Deyessa & Kaba 2010:39; Nawaz et al 2008:74; Townsend 2008:41; Ellison, Trinitapoli, Anderson & Johnson 2007:1094; Tracy 2007:573; Stahl 2007:163; Khan 2006:82; Akrong 2005:106; Ariarajah 2002:58; Dobash & Dobash 1981:565). Domestic violence is often used to dominate and maintain control over women within the context of intimate relationships (Clowes, Sandy & Ratele 2010:15; Nawaz et al 2008:74; Rotunda, Williamson & Penfold 2004:364; Madraiwiwi 2003:46, Petersen 1983:24). As a result of domestic violence, marriage becomes “a long night of winter, devoid of warmth and contentment”, as Nkealah (2009:36) describes. In this connection, the marriage relationship which should be characterised by love and harmony, security and happiness, becomes a source of terror and trauma.

Domestic violence, which is both a social and a health problem, is pervasive and occurs across the world cutting across all divisions of class, race, religion, age, ethnicity, and geographical region (Reed 2010:22; Yigzaw et al 2010:39; Nawaz et al 2008:74; Tracy 2006:280; Manetta et al 2003:6; Maluleke & Nadar 2002:6; Yoshihama 2002:389; Macey 1998:156; Cooper-White 1996:4).

Domestic violence is also no stranger to families of faith as attested by many studies on the interface between domestic violence and religion (for example, Sharp 2011; Gonzalez 2010; Sisselman 2009; Sheikh 2008; Wendt 2008; Potter 2007; Richardson 2007; Amenga-Etego 2006; Levitt & Ware 2006a,b; Abugideiri 2005; Nason-Clark 1997, 1999, 2004 & 2009; Knickmeyer 2004; Rotunda et al 2004; Horne & Levitt 2003; Knickmeyer, Levitt, Horne & Bayer 2003; Phiri 2002, 2001; Hendricks 1998:4; Cooper-White 1996:4; Petersen 1983:13). As revealed in the literature, domestic violence happens to Christian and Muslim women even at the hands of respectable religious men including clergy. Thus, despite the fact that “religious rhetoric is replete with references to happy families, many religious women are victimised by husbands who promised before God to love and cherish them for life” (Nason-Clark 2004:304). The myth of the happy Christian family forms what Cooper-White (1996:3) refers to as “an imaginary cloak around an emperor who rules over his family with force”.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has acknowledged the existence of violence in, and in the name of, religion (Ariarajah 2002:67). Indeed, research has shown that violence and religion are linked in the sense that some religious beliefs and practices tend to reinforce the notion that domestic violence is acceptable. Violence against women is related to power and patriarchy which is deeply rooted in many religious traditions (Partab 2011:106; Bradley 2010:362; Knickmeyer et al 2010:103; Sisselman 2009:20; Nawaz et al 2008:75; Townsend 2008:64; NRCDV 2007a:3; Tracy 2007:280; Levitt & Ware 2006a:220; Abugideiri 2005:2; Rakoczy 2005:7; Manetta et al 2003:18; Maluleke & Nadar 2002:9, 11; Ola-Aluko & Edewor 2002:17; Rzepka 2002:1-2; Phiri 2001:88; Hendricks 1998:2; Fiorenza 1995b:143; Fortune 1984:19; Petersen 1983:24).

Although religion seems to condone domestic violence, there are situations when it condemns domestic violence (Devine & Deneulin 2011:59; Bradley 2010:362; NRCDV 2007b:1), sometimes empowering the abused to leave abusive relationships. This ambivalence renders religion “as much a part of the problem of domestic violence as it is an agent in the solution” (McMullen 2002:197). In a similar vein, Sisselman (2009:20) states that “involvement in a faith community or with a religious leader could be a source of strength but could also be a risk factor for someone in a domestically violent relationship”. By implication, therefore, one’s involvement in a religious community is bound to influence one’s conceptualisation of, and reaction to, social problems like domestic violence (Devine & Deneulin 2011:63; Bradley 2010:362; Joubert-Wallis 2008:25; Wendt 2008:144; NRCDV 2007a:1; Haddad 2006:136; Gustafon 2005:31; Rotunda et al 2004:362; Smith 2004:426; Hackett 1995:262), hence this study was carried out to find out the extent to which religion influenced religious women (Christians and Muslims)’s responses to domestic violence.

In Zimbabwe there have been a number of initiatives, both governmental and non-governmental, to raise the status of women and thus in a way address violence against women, for example, gender-sensitive legislation such as the Legal Age of Majority of 1982. This piece of legislation ensured that anyone who attains the age of eighteen becomes a legal major regardless of gender. Women, who previously were regarded as perpetual minors, now attain majority status at the age of eighteen, effectively becoming capable of representing themselves in courts of law. In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing China, during which a Platform for Action was set in motion. Its main objective was to seek protection for women and girls facing domestic violence, among other abuses (Mesatywa 2009:21).

In spite of significant attention given to the topic of domestic violence in recent years, it continues to be a massive problem with enormous individual and societal consequences (Townsend 2008:41; Tracy 2007:74; Okereke 2006:4; Van Dyke 2005:2; Lutembacher et al 2003:56; Kethusegile, Kwaramba & Lopi 2000:165). This seems to be aggravated by society’s general acceptance of male violence against

women. In this connection, Maluleke and Nadar (2002:6) speak of a covenant between human societies and violence; a covenant that suggests that “violence against women is inevitable, necessary and normal.” The cited authorities suggest that generally there is unwillingness on the part of society to intervene in the case of domestic violence. There is seemingly some kind of acceptance of the problem or even a refusal to address the problem. In a related discourse, Fortune (1984:19) accuses the church of having failed to hear the suffering of victims of family violence because it has failed to speak out. There is generally a denial of the existence of domestic violence in religious families. Where the existence of domestic violence within religious contexts is acknowledged, clergy members are often not willing to see marriages end in divorce (Gonzalez 2010:89; Kulwicki, Aswad, Carmona & Ballout 2010:733; Sheikh 2008:75; Binford-Weaver 2005:99; Knickmeyer 2004:7; Maluleke & Nadar 2002:11; Thompson 2001:79; Nason-Clark 1999:51) hence they suggest solutions other than leaving the relationship of abuse.

An escalation in cases of domestic violence gave rise to the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act of Zimbabwe in 2006. Against the background that no social group is immune to domestic violence, it was the goal of the present study to find out the extent to which abused religious (Christian and Muslim) women took advantage of the provisions of the Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act. Christianity and Islam are the major missionary religions in Zimbabwe, particularly in Masvingo Province which formed the geographical scope of the current study. Of particular interest was the need to find out the interface between religious people (Christian and Muslim women facing domestic violence) and the utilisation of the Domestic Violence Act.

1.2 PROVISIONS OF THE ZIMBABWEAN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT (CHAPTER 5:16)

The Domestic Violence Act (Zimbabwe) was promulgated in 2006 and gazetted in 2007. The Act was put in place to “make provision for the protection and relief of victims of domestic violence and to provide for matters connected with or incidental to the foregoing” (Zimbabwe 2006). Section 3 of the Act (Zimbabwe 2006, subsection 1) defines domestic violence as:

any unlawful act, omission or behaviour which results in death or the direct infliction of physical, sexual, or mental injury to any complainant¹ by a respondent² and includes the following: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, forcible entry into the complainant's residence where the parties do not share the same residence, depriving the complainant or hindering the complainant from access to or a reasonable share of the use of the facilities associated with the complainant's place of residence.

A victim of domestic violence may report the violence to a police officer, who, according to Section 5 of the Act (Zimbabwe 2006) advises the complainant of the right to apply for relief under the Act and the right to lodge a criminal complaint against the perpetrator. Where the police officer suspects that a crime has been committed, is being committed or is threatened, he or she may arrest the respondent without warrant. The victim or his or her representative may apply for an interim protection order or a protection order for relief from abuse. A protection order is a document that a magistrate signs and is aimed at protecting the complainant from serious or substantial harm or discomfort or inconvenience, whether physical, emotional or economic (Zimbabwe 2006, Section 9; Nawaz et al. 2008:75). The protection order may outline certain demands (such as economic relief for the complainant and children) or prohibitions (such as preventing visits to the complainant) (Zimbabwe 2006, Section 11). Where there is a change of circumstances, a protection order may be revoked by application (by the complainant or his or her representative) through the clerk or registrar of court but it normally lasts for a period of at least 5 years (Zimbabwe 2006, Section 12).

NOTE: All footnotes on the affiliation of the authors reflect their affiliation at the time of writing the articles or books.

¹The complainant is a beneficiary of the Act and is described in the Act as “A current or former estranged spouse of the respondent, or any person who cohabits with the respondent, is or has been in an intimate relationship with the respondent”. In the context of the current study, the complainant is the woman who is experiencing or has experienced domestic violence at the hands of an intimate partner or spouse.

²The respondent is the alleged perpetrator of an actual or threatened act of domestic violence.

The Act was a major accomplishment that acknowledged the seriousness of violence against women in Zimbabwe. Prior to the establishment of the Act, there had not been any law in Zimbabwe that specifically addressed domestic violence (Osirim [2003] in Makahamadze, Isacco & Chireshe 2011:3; Tichagwa 1998:66). The enactment of the Domestic Violence Act implies that domestic violence is being taken as a public affair that requires public prosecution.

1.3 TERMINOLOGY

A number of terms such as domestic abuse, intimate partner violence, spousal abuse, family violence and partner violence are used interchangeably in the literature to denote violence that takes place within the context of the home. As in the literature, these terms are also used interchangeably in this study although the term domestic violence is most frequently used. The corresponding terms husband, partner, intimate partner and spouse are also interchangeably. Within the framework of the present study, the term “domestic violence” involves the abuse of an individual by a current or former spouse and a violation of the rights of the abused within the context of the family. This violence is shown as a pattern of assaults and coercive behaviours that husbands or former husbands use against their intimate partners in order to control them and includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse (Nawaz et al 2008:74; Khan 2006:80; Van Dyke 2005:2; Lutenbacher et al 2003:56; Miles 2002a:27; Wu King 1999:61).

In its designation of violent acts, this study was largely guided by the Domestic Violence Act of Zimbabwe (2006) (Appendix C), also referred to as the Act in this study. Section 3 of the Act (Zimbabwe 2006, Subsection 2) defines physical abuse as including “any act or threatened act of physical violence (such as hitting, kicking, shoving, punching) towards a complainant”; sexual violence as “conduct that violates the sexual integrity of the complainant”; emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse as “a pattern of degrading or humiliating conduct towards a complainant, for example, name-calling, repeated exhibition of excessive possessiveness which can be construed to constitute a serious invasion of the complainant’s privacy, liberty, security or

integrity”; and economic abuse as constituting “deprivation of economic or financial resources to which a complainant is entitled under law and denying the complainant the right to seek employment.” All the forms of abuse express a desire to control on the part of the perpetrator of the violence or abuse.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As already alluded to in the background, domestic violence against women is a universal problem. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that domestic violence is also a reality in Christian and Muslim homes in Zimbabwe. The violence experienced by religious women is often compounded by the fact that religion teaches the virtue of silence (Sharp 2011:90; Gonzalez 2010:87; Nason-Clark 2009:385; Sisselman 2009:20; Sheikh 2008:91; Wendt 2008:151; Levitt & Ware 2006b:1169; Tracy 2006:74; Petersen 1983:13). This tends to discourage victims from speaking out about the abuse and reaching out for help.

The violence experienced by Zimbabwean women, like that experienced elsewhere, assumes a variety of forms which include, among others, wife battering, economic, and emotional violence, all of which fall within the scope of domestic violence as defined by the Domestic Violence Act (Section 3).

Owing to the prevalence and magnitude of domestic violence, many governments, including that of Zimbabwe, have put in place legal provisions intended to tackle the problem. It is against this background that the government of Zimbabwe instituted the Domestic Violence Act in 2006. However, for any piece of legislation to be of value it must be put into practice. In other words, victims of domestic abuse need to avail themselves of the legal provision if that law is to make any difference in their lives. This translation of the Domestic Violence Act into practical usage can be determined by one’s religious orientation (Townsend 2008:27; Wendt 2008:149; Burn 2005:191), hence the study of abused women’s experiences within a religious context.

As already noted in the background, the interface between religious beliefs and domestic violence has of late received much attention especially in the West. However, not much has been done on the interface between domestic violence and use of legal provisions by religious people, especially in Zimbabwe, hence the current

study's focus on the utilisation of the Domestic Violence Act by abused Christian and Muslim women in Zimbabwe.

1.5 THE AIM OF THE STUDY

Against the background set out above, it was the aim of this study to investigate whether, and to what extent, abused Christian and Muslim women utilised the legal system, specifically the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act in Zimbabwe. The study also sought to find out whether religion stifled the usefulness of the Act to the abused women of faith under investigation. Furthermore, the study also sought to find out the extent to which religion, as a significant locus of education and moral standards, influenced abused women's reactions to domestic violence. This exploration was cognisant of Scheneider's (2000:189) theory that women who experience domestic violence will "face barriers in accessing legal remedies".

The investigation was guided by the following questions:

- 1.5.1 What are the selected women's views on the role of women in their religion and to what extent have these views influenced their decisions to seek assistance?
- 1.5.2 Where and to what extent does a select group of Christian and Muslim women who fall victim to domestic violence normally seek help?
- 1.5.3 How do religious and cultural beliefs and practices influence the response to domestic violence by the abused as well as those to whom they report?
- 1.5.4 To what extent do religious communities prevent selected victims of domestic violence from seeking legal assistance?
- 1.5.5 To what extent, if at all, do selected religious women seek legal assistance for the problem?

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Although many approaches and methods can be utilised in studying religion-related phenomena, this study was conducted within a framework that combined two somewhat divergent approaches- the phenomenological and the feminist, as well as pragmatism.

While Religious Studies calls for a phenomenological approach which entails suspension of all preconceived ideas in order to let phenomena speak for themselves, it (Religious Studies) allows looking at religion from different perspectives. This leeway allowed for the study of abused religious women within the feminist framework. Thus, as I employed the phenomenological and feminist approaches, I realised that there was a tension between the phenomenological approach which sought total objectivity by suspending the “baggage of preconceived ideas” (Young 2002:195) and the feminist approach, which entails putting on a specific set of lenses. However, as I used feminist lenses which called for a “reflexivity that examines the perspective of the researcher and names this perspective in the research report” (Jones 2002:83), I was cognisant that there was need for some ‘distancing’ to allow for some objectivity and critical reflection.

1.6.1 Phenomenology of religion

The phenomenological approach was adopted because of the relevance of its key elements *epoche*, empathy, and the descriptive element, which were central to the current study. Phenomenology of religion is an approach by which an issue can be studied, but also provides for a method by which the issue can be studied. The approach provided the framework within which this research was conducted, while the method provided for the tools with which the study was conducted. While this Chapter (1) describes the phenomenological approach, Chapter 6 will describe the phenomenological method. The phenomenological approach used for this study allowed participants to express their individual perceptions of their experiences of domestic violence.

1.6.1.1 Epoche

Phenomenology employs the procedures of *epoche* to the study of diverse religious experiences (Young 2002:31; Cox 1996:26). Cox explains that *epoche* involves suspending (bracketing) beliefs and withholding judgments about the matter under study. *Epoche* is a tool for avoiding premature value judgments. Since the phenomenological approach allows suspension of all preconceived ideas in order to permit phenomena to speak for themselves (Young 2002:19), it was found appropriate for this study. By allowing the researcher to suspend preconceived ideas, the phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the

experiences of the abused women from their own perspectives. The employment of *epoche* minimised any preconceptions and assisted the researcher to gain new insights. *Epoche* was maintained throughout the research study.

1.6.1.2 Empathy

After *epoche* the next step in the phenomenological approach as described by Cox (1996:28) is the attitude of empathy. This involves “entering into the believing community one is studying” (Cox 1996:29). In Religious Studies, the phenomenological approach that includes empathy is instrumental in understanding people in a wide variety of religious and social contexts and from the perspectives of the individuals concerned (Young 2002:31). Empathy is based on the notion that the experience of the person is important if their actions are to be understood. This does not call for the researcher to believe what the participants believe, but to make an attempt to enter their world and see from their points of view in order to understand their actions (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:7; Moustakas 1994:21; Moon, Dillon & Sprenkle 1990:358).

Since the study was in the discipline of Religious Studies all perspectives were described from within, and the researcher did not make any judgments and evaluations on truth claims regarding the perceptions and religious beliefs of the participants. Empathising with the abused women allowed for the gaining of some insights into their experiences.

1.6.1.3 Description

The phenomenological approach is predominantly a method that provides good description of phenomena (Young 2002:21; Cox 1996:31). The descriptive element made the phenomenological approach particularly relevant for this study as the aim was the full description of the experiences of abused Zimbabwean Christian and Muslim women. The phenomenological approach allowed participants to freely express their individual perceptions about their experiences of both domestic violence and religion. The researcher attempted to describe as accurately as possible the feelings, attitudes and convictions of the participants (see Cox 1996:31).

1.6.1.4 Eidetic intuition

As part of the description process of the phenomenological approach, the phenomena were named and assigned to categories. This resulted from creative interaction with

research data which involved interpretation. Given that description of human cognitive and emotional life is “never devoid of meaning” (Jones 2002:23), the phenomenological approach, grounded in empiricism and involving the search for patterns or ‘essences’ (Young 2002: 21), was deemed appropriate for this study. After naming the phenomena and describing the relationships, ‘seeing into the essence’ (eidetic intuition) occurred. Focusing on individual experiences through interviews, this study culminated in the formation of general patterns, based on commonalities in the participants’ experiences. While I acknowledge that individual experiences are unique, I subscribe to the phenomenological assertion, as articulated by Young (2002:31-32), that there may be general principles and that on the basis of seeing particulars, we also become aware of their affinities, which constitute the essence or pattern.

The phenomenological approach was inspirational to this study which had women as its focus. The phenomenological techniques of *epoche* and empathy were used to understand the women from their own specific perspectives.

1.6.2 The Feminist approach

The phenomenological qualitative approach to the study of abused religious women was framed within the context of the influence of feminism. Feminist research explores realities and experiences of women (Townsend 2008:132; Hallstein 1999:37; Hartsock 1998:36). To the extent that the current study investigated women who were or had been victims of domestic violence, it is at heart a feminist project.

There are diverse feminist perspectives which include radical, liberal and Marxist/socialist perspectives (Cooper-White 2008:19; Moghadam 2002:1165; Moghissi 1999:93). However, for the purpose of this thesis, the feminist perspective was based on the common conviction that cuts across the various perspectives, that is, a commitment to investigating the experiences of women in society and to try to view the world from the perspective of women. Because a feminist perspective places women at the centre within their respective contexts (Sai 2007:132; Hooks 2000:111; Morgan 1999:46; Gurin 1985:144), women’s experiences of domestic violence were

central to this investigation. The feminist approach afforded women a safe realm within which to tell their stories and in so doing validated and empowered them.

Since feminism is grounded in the reorientation of the study of religion through the inclusion of women's experiences in every part of religious and theological analysis (Mesatywa 2009:33; Cooper-White 2008:18; Moyo 2004b:74; Hooks 2000:106; Morgan 1999:46), this study 'breathes a feminist spirit' in that it has given voice to women by letting them describe and evaluate their own experiences of domestic violence from their own perspectives.

Feminism has challenged Biblical ideals of the subordinate, domesticated female, demanding the political and social equality of the sexes as a God-given right (Morgan 1999:46). By treating women as subjects and not objects, this study reflects the influence of feminists such as Radford Ruether and Mercy Amba Oduyoye who insist that women were also created in the divine image and therefore warrant equal representation and recognition in every sphere of life.

The feminist perspective entails a critique of patriarchy (Hooks 2000:viii). In the 1970s, feminists spoke of patriarchy as "the master pattern in human history"; a system of operation where males dominated all aspects of life, that is, culture, the economy, communication, kinship and sexuality (Sai 2007:101). Patriarchy is the institutionalisation of men's power over women within economical, religious, social, political and marital relations (Para-Mallan 2010:460; Uchendu 2008:13; Moyo 2004b:73; Rotunda et al 2004:354; Rakoczy 2005:8; Hooks 2000:ix; Tamasase & Waldegrave 1994:57; Ogundipe 1993:112).

As described by Hooks (2000:ix), patriarchy favours men at the expense of women since "males as a group have and do benefit the most from patriarchy, from the assumption that they are superior to females." Seen from the context of the preceding conceptions of patriarchy, one would view patriarchy as a system characterised by male dominance and subordination of females. Because patriarchy is based on male dominance, it is hegemonic in nature, subjugating women and silencing them. This study's thrust to allow women space to speak, to share their experiences of domestic violence, makes it feminist. In keeping with the feminist approach which treats women as subjects and not objects (Hooks 2000:111), this study was done with, rather than on women. Participants served as co-creators of knowledge.

The feminist approach, regardless of orientation, is a challenge to existing theoretical perspectives by re-examining old materials and concepts in terms of gender and power relations (Miller 2009:103; Cooper-White 2008:18; Moghadam 2002:1165; King 1995 in Morgan 1999:47). Irrespective of what form it assumes, feminism is grounded in the realisation that society is constructed in ways that underprivilege women (Nkealah 2009:35; Ntarangwi 2000:25; Moghissi 1999:93; Lather 1991:17). Viewed from a feminist perspective, patriarchy lays a fertile ground for the abuse of women (Partab 2011:108; Myamba 2009:50; Stahl 2007:48; Tracy 2007:74; McCloskey, Williams & Larsen 2005:124; Moyo 2004b:73; Bowman 2003:853; Battaglia 2001:8; Hooks 2000:64; Cooper-White 1996:5; Hampson 1990:99; Ruether 1989:31). The feminist model is critical in explaining violence against women which is at the heart of the present study. In light of this, violence against women, in this case domestic violence, is a matter of male power over women (Puhala 2011:22; Myamba 2009:50; Nkealah 2009:35; Sai 2007:258; Townsend 2008:246; Rakoczy 2005:7; Tsanga 1999:58). The “control-over component” gives patriarchy a propensity to violence (Tracy 2007:282). While women are also initiators of domestic violence, gender parity is non-existent when it comes to violence (Ellison et al 2007:1094; Tracy 2007:74). The point is reiterated by Sisselman (2009:14) who acknowledges that men are also evidently victims of domestic violence but “the most common victim and the most socially injured party is usually a woman”.

Many cultures sanction men’s right to control their wives’ behaviour with the effect that those women who are viewed as disobedient or challenging may be subjected to punishment (Hooks 2000:64; Yigzaw et al 2010:39). In view of men’s ‘monopoly of violence’, Maluleke and Nadar (2002:6) suggest that violence is a factor that is common to all women when they assert that “[a]longside Coca-Cola, Levi Jeans and hamburgers, nothing is more common, resilient and widespread in the cultures of the world than violence against women”. This study’s consideration of women as victims of violence in a patriarchal culture renders it feminist.

According to the feminist theory, patriarchy is the ultimate cause, the “overarching construct which ultimately engenders violence against women” (Tracy 2007:274; Dunaway 2002:39). Seen from this perspective, domestic violence is at the heart of patriarchal relations of oppression. As Mesatywa (2009:33) puts it, “[w]ithin the African context, patriarchy shapes the construction and perpetuation of African

women's oppression". Violence against women epitomises male abuse of power and privilege (Nkealah 2009:35; Sai 2007:246; Rotunda et al 2004:354; Kesselman, McNair, & Schniedewind 2003:444). In the private sphere of the family, patriarchy asserts power through the control of women which may be social, economic, as well as shaming and blaming (Rakoczy 2005:7; Ogundipe 1993:113).

Feminism seeks to fight the domination and oppression of women by social patriarchal structures that promote male chauvinism. From a feminist perspective, violence against women is a critical tool in the maintenance of male hegemony; it is the means by which the patriarchal requirements of conformity and obedience are extended to women and enforced (Partab 2011:103; Poon 2011:8; Puhala 2011:22; Sai 2007:258; Rakoczy 2005:6; Rotunda et al 2004:353; Hooks 2000:64; Rowan-Campbell 1999:20).

The patriarchal nature of society has a religious basis. The Ultimate Being, designated variously as God, Allah, Brahman, Mwari, or by some other name, is depicted as having given the male the prerogative to rule the female. Within almost all religious traditions, based on written scriptures, there is a justification of patriarchy. Major religions are accused of silencing the voice of women who, according to them, should only be seen and not heard (Morgan 1999:47). In this connection, Gage (1893), cited in Morgan (1999:46), argues that the history of most religions, Christianity included, has been constructed "upon an entire edifice of sexual inequality and comprehensive female disempowerment". In view of this history, feminism seeks to expose the androcentrism or male centredness of existing scriptural interpretations. By affirming that women are the victims of violence in religious as well as social contexts, this study can best be understood as having a feminist orientation.

Abusive men often explicitly or implicitly cite male headship and female submissiveness to justify their abuse, arguing that their wives are responsible for the abuse because they were not submissive (Ogland 2011:30; Clowes et al 2010:15; Myamba 2009:51; Wendt 2008:148; Partab 2011:103; Miles 1999:32; Johnson 1995a:284; Ferraro & Johnson 1983:334). As Mwamwenda (1995:483) puts it, "[b]eating of wives occurs because a husband feels that he is superior to the wife". Within the framework of Christianity this dominance approach seems to emanate from the religious teaching that wives should submit to their husbands who are the

household heads (Tracy 2006:282; see also Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18-19; Titus 2:5). Since wives ought to be submissive in everything to their husbands, batterers feel permitted to mete out punishment to their wives for perceived misbehaviour (Chirawu 2006:26). Within the context of Islam, the depiction of men as managers of women (Surah 4:34), places women in a position of vulnerability in relation to their male counterparts, especially their spouses (Wadud 2006:192; al-Hibri 1999:121). It is against this background of wifely submissiveness that the current study was undertaken.

Considering that the misogynous treatment of women is rooted in culture and reinforced in theology and ministry, “adequate ministry on domestic violence requires a theological reconstruction in a feminist vein” (Pellauer 1983:211). The connection between feminist theology as liberation theology and the alleviation of violence against women can be extrapolated from the preceding argument. This study assumed a feminist liberation stance as it provided abused women with a platform to share their experiences.

Until the latter part of the 20th century, domestic violence was not consistently prosecuted because of “patriarchal presuppositions” (Tracy 2006:592); because it was considered a private affair whose publicity threatened the integrity of the patriarchal family. Today, domestic violence is a punishable offence in many countries (Nawaz et al 2008:74). The Domestic Violence Act of Zimbabwe (2006) was put in place to protect the victims, mostly women, hence the Act is presumed to be, for the most part, geared towards addressing the security needs of women who fall victim to domestic violence. As women are often treated as second-class citizens in society in general and in the family in particular (Ntlama 2010:20; Nwankwo 2003:101; Kethusegile et al 2000:68), the Act was largely intended to assist in curbing the systematic violent conditions experienced by women in the domestic sphere. The putting in place of the Act is in keeping with the feminist analysis of the law which includes presenting domestic violence as a public issue that needs to be treated as a public crime rather than a private problem which requires private solutions (Puhala 2011:22). As feminism conceptualises domestic violence as an expression of gender inequality, the Act can be seen as a law within a feminist framework. In this connection, this study is inherently feminist in so far as it investigated the usefulness of such a law to abused Christian and Muslim women.

As suggested by Campbell and Wasco (2000:773), feminist research is premised on the understanding that women's life stories are important and that women should be given the opportunity to tell their stories. Given that a feminist methodology gives the researcher the flexibility to relate to female participants in subjective ways from their own perspective, the methodology empowered participants by giving them the opportunity to tell their stories.

All in all, the feminist perspective on female subservience and patriarchy provided an appropriate framework for studying women's experiences of domestic violence. Using the feminist framework and capturing the essence of the experiences of abused Christian and Muslim women formed the gist of this study.

1.6.3 Pragmatism

Since this study sought to find out the practical usefulness of the Act to abused Christian and Muslim women, pragmatism was found to be a relevant framework. Pragmatism, which is usually associated with the American philosophers Charles Saunders Peirce, William James and John Dewey, is concerned with the applicability or the working of ideas in real life situations (O'Hear 1985:90). Seen in this light, pragmatism is preoccupied with what Akinpelu (1988:141) refers to as the "cash-value" of ideas. In the context of legislation, pragmatists would argue that a worthwhile piece of legislation is one that has the capacity and is actually used to solve practical problems. A law that makes a difference in people's lives is instrumental and hence has a pragmatic value, that is, practical utility. In the framework of the present study, the usefulness or utility of the Domestic Violence Act was assessed on the extent to which it made a difference in the lives of Christian and Muslim women who were, or had been, abused by their husbands. The exploration of women's experiences was in keeping with the pragmatist emphasis on lived experiences and the search for meaning within specific contexts (see Kadlec 2006:523; Duran 1993:169; Marks 1992:165). Like feminism, pragmatism spoke, within the context of this study, to the lived experiences of abused women.

A consideration of the extent to which abused religious women took advantage of the Act was necessary in view of the fact that religion has a bearing on the lives of people. Religion influences the way people think about and conceptualise social

problems such as domestic violence (Sisselman 2009:19). The effectiveness of legal reforms to address domestic violence is partly a function of the social acceptance of such reforms. This social acceptance is, in turn, influenced by the perceived compatibility of the legal reforms with religious and cultural beliefs (Hajjar 2004:10). Given this scenario, religious and cultural realities often prevent the translation of abstract rights into real, substantive rights (Hellum & Stewart 1999:271). It was the purpose of this study to find out whether religious and cultural realities prevented a selected group of abused Christian and Muslim women from utilising the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act of Zimbabwe, Chapter 5:16, (Number 14 of 2006).

1.7 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

Thirty abused women (22 Christian and 8 Muslim) were selected for interviews. Since in-depth interviews were used, it was necessary to curtail numbers. Thirty participants provided rich raw data in order to allow for patterns to emerge. The study was carried out in Masvingo urban and peri-urban areas. These areas were selected because of their proximity to the researcher. Furthermore, the bulk of the Muslim population in Masvingo province is found in these areas so the researcher felt it was most plausible to carry out the investigation among both Christian and Muslim women in these areas. The study did not concern itself with violence against men and children, violence against non-religious individuals, or violence against members of other religious groupings.

1.8 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The information provided by this study could go a long way in showing, to various stakeholders, the utility of the Act to Christian and Muslim women who were victims of domestic violence. It was the researcher's conviction that the dimension under the spotlight, that is, the extent to which Christian and Muslim women in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, took advantage of the Domestic Violence Act, had little, if any, documentation. As such, this research sought to contribute to the body of knowledge on religion, women and the law in Zimbabwe. During the research process, women who were not aware of the provisions of the Act were conscientised on the law.

Religious leaders and spiritual counsellors may be challenged to revisit their approach to domestic violence in an attempt to deal effectively with the menace.

1.9 LAYOUT OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of two parts, Part 1 and Part 2. Part 1 consists of Chapters 1 to 5 which form the context of the study and Part 2 consists of Chapters 6 to 8 which form the research process. Chapter 1 covered the background to the study and statement of the problem. The purpose of the study was presented alongside corresponding research questions. Boundaries of the study were outlined. The relevance of the study was spelt out. Chapter 2 describes the status and role of women in African Religion and culture. The chapter was included on the assumption that African Religion and culture influenced the participants' conceptualisation of the teachings of missionary religions, specifically Christianity and Islam, which were central to the present study. An understanding of the religious and cultural background of participants facilitated an understanding of their conceptualisation of and reaction to domestic violence.

Chapter 3 describes the status and role of women in Christianity, showing how this is influenced by scriptural interpretations of different times. Chapter 4 describes the status and role of Muslim women, taking cognisance of the diversity in Islam. Chapter 5 focuses on a literature survey. In this chapter, related studies are analysed in terms of their relevance to the present study as well as the knowledge gaps the present study sought to fill.

Chapter 6 describes the research design and process as it unfolded during the study. The design is qualitative and is within the phenomenological and feminist paradigms as well as pragmatic perspectives. Chapter 7 is an analysis and discussion of the findings in the light of related studies in the literature. Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter, which summarises the study, draws conclusions, and from the conclusions makes a number of recommendations. Limitations of the study and the attendant contribution of the study are explicated in this final chapter.

1.10 SUMMARY

The foregoing chapter has introduced the research problem and stated the rationale for the study. Domestic violence, as one of the most devastating abuses, has been presented as a serious global problem with devastating social and health consequences especially for women. It has been noted that while both males and females fall victim to domestic violence, in most cases it is the man who is the perpetrator and the woman who is the victim. From a feminist perspective, patriarchy and its partner, hegemonic masculinity, were presented as at the root of domestic violence against women. The Domestic Violence Act was presented as central to the study in that the experiences of Christian and Muslim women who had been abused by their intimate partners were considered in view of the usefulness of the Act. The chapter also presented the study as aiming to find out whether and to what extent religion impacts on abused women's capacity to take advantage of the Domestic Violence Act which seeks both to prevent and stop domestic violence. Research boundaries and the research programme were outlined.

The forthcoming chapter discusses the status and role of women in African Religion and culture. The rationale behind the inclusion of the chapter is that African Religion and culture form the cultural heritage of Shona Christian and Muslim women in Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER 2: ROLE OF WOMEN IN AFRICAN RELIGION AND CULTURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the status and role of women in African Religion and culture. The term African Religion is used in the context of this study to refer to what is often termed African Traditional Religion; the indigenous religion of Africans. The inclusion of this chapter in the thesis is grounded in the reality that “social position necessarily shapes experience and perspective” (Kesselman, McNair & Schniedewind 2003:185). Thus, women’s experiences and perceptions of domestic violence are influenced by their social position in both religion and culture. As such, the chapter is relevant to the discussion on domestic violence among women. It should be borne in mind that in most cases it is difficult to distinguish between African religious and cultural aspects, given that religion pervades all aspects of life. Religion is also a cultural aspect that directs the culture of the African people.

Given the diversity of societies in Africa, it is difficult to make general statements on African culture. This chapter does not claim to present African Religion and culture in general, but Shona³ religion and culture in particular, in view of the fact that the current study was conducted within the context of the Shona society in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. Considering the current thrust on the Shona society and the attendant Shona religion and culture, where the term African is employed, it refers to the Shona as a representative of the African. Thus the terms Shona and African are used interchangeably.

The current study involved abused Christian and Muslim women. Considering that the two world religions, Christianity and Islam, came to people who already had their own religion and culture, this indigenous religion and culture needs to be taken into consideration in a discussion of any aspect of the people concerned. An understanding of an individual’s cultural background helps to illuminate the degree to which the individual concerned responds to the teachings of an incoming religion. As John Mbiti (1978:27) contends, “Conversion to the Gospel takes place within a cultural

³The Shona people constitute the dominant ethnic group in Zimbabwe.

framework. ...Culture is the medium of receiving, diffusing, tuning in and relaying the Gospel.” The point is reiterated by Kanyoro (1999:54) who states that culture is the medium in which the Christian message is communicated. Although Mbiti and Kanyoro wrote within the ambit of Christianity as an incoming religion, the same can be said of Islam, given its ‘guest’ status in Africa in general and Shona society in particular. Mbiti (1978:27) is making the suggestion that the host religion shapes the conceptualisation and practice of the incoming religion, a phenomenon referred to as inculturation. According to Tremmel (1994:8), inculturation is the ‘in-thing’. It encourages the expression of African Christian faith in terms that are in keeping with local customs, symbols and thought. Both Christianity and Islam can be contextualised by ‘dressing them in an African (Shona) garb’, that is, suiting them to the Shona context. In light of this, when one speaks of an African Christianity or an African Islam one will be pointing to the development of a Christianity and an Islam suited to the African condition; incorporating elements of African Religion and culture and thus rooted in the African soil. According to Mbiti (1978:39), the convert to another religion does not leave behind their “cultural luggage.” In light of this, the Shona culture will illuminate Christian and Muslim women’s reaction to domestic violence.

2.2 THE ESSENCE OF AFRICAN RELIGION AND CULTURE

African Religion (often referred to as African Traditional Religion) is the “indigenous beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, customs and practices of Africans borne out of the expression and deep reflection of their forebearers. These traditions evolved over many centuries” (Ebere 2011:481). African Religion has provided a set of ethics by which men and women ought to live. As such, it has a bearing on the culture of Africans (Ter Haar 1990:17). By helping human beings understand their origin, relationships among themselves and within the universe, African Religion provides a knowledge base (epistemological foundation) for Africans. To Africans religion is a complete way of life that pervades all aspects of life (Ebere 2011:482).

Culture concerns the whole way of life of a society and therefore includes religion (Rukuni 2007:21; Bourdillon 1993:7; Robertson 1981:53). Culture is shared and

learned through the process of socialisation. Culture provides a paradigm, a framework within which people think and live (Bourdillon 1993:11). It is, therefore, no wonder that people often cite culture to support actions which serve their interests. Culture consists of all the material and non-material aspects of human society. Material aspects include physical objects such as buildings, food, dress and non-material aspects include language, beliefs, customs, norms, values, folklore, skills, and family patterns. Culture is dynamic, constantly changing in response to the changing environment (Bourdillon 1993:7).

Culture has a bearing on gender relations. Males and females internalise societal values and gender roles into which they are socialised (Madu, Ndom & Ramashia 2010:2879; Joubert-Wallis 2008:21; Burn 2005:21; McCloskey et al 2005:125; Burman, Smailes & Chantler 2004:346). While culture includes religion, making the two highly interconnected and difficult to separate, for the purpose of this presentation, I shall attempt to treat religion separately from culture. Religion will be used in a specialised way to refer to religious rites and rituals whereas culture is taken to be people's way of life outside the religious realm. An understanding of the role of women in religion calls for an understanding of their role in society (Suda 1996:74). This is because the Shona religion, like any other religion, affects society through what Horton and Hunt (1984:266) term "the cultural ethos"- the dominant values which it fosters.

While the current study focuses on African, in particular Shona, women in Christianity and Islam, it is cognisant of the fact that African women are first and foremost members of African Religion because people are not converted to this religion but born in it. Given that "religious experience is always mediated through particular cultural contexts" (Clague 2008: 288), it is necessary to understand the role of women in particular cultures in order to understand their interpretation of religious (Christian and Muslim) teachings in the face of domestic violence.

2.3 STATUS OF WOMEN IN AFRICAN RELIGION

A discussion on African Religion calls for an exposition of the hallmark of that religion. Traditional Religion is integral to Shona culture. African religion is grounded in the memory of, and respect for, deceased members of society, often designated as

the living dead or ancestral spirits (Bourdillon 1973:11). The Shona believe that when a person dies, their spirit continues to live and to influence the living. The spirit of the dead is believed to communicate to the living through a spirit medium who serves as the human host of the spirit.

The status of women in traditional Shona Religion needs to be understood against the background that “traditional religion bolsters the traditional social structure” (Bourdillon 1973:22). Thus, a person’s position in the traditional religious system normally replicates his or her social position.

African women have generally occupied subordinate positions in most traditional African rituals despite their significant role in the ancestor belief system (Para-Mallam 2010:464; Mukonyora 1999:276; Suda 1996:76). Traditions concerning the spirits are considered to be in the male domain (Bourdillon 1998:52). However, in the absence of men appropriately related to the spirit or when available men are reluctant to perform the necessary rituals, a senior woman may preside over a ceremony such as pouring of libations for ancestors (Bourdillon 1998:52). It should be acknowledged that in their practice of ancestor veneration, women were and are often constrained by marriage. This is articulated by Mukonyora (1999:276) who states that “As the *vatorwa* (the ones from outside the lineage in a system of exogamy), women often remain removed from the religion of their ancestors, even if they sometimes played important roles.” Males are the interpreters of religious teachings and the performers of rituals (Burn 2005:21). According to Mukonyora (1999:276), men have traditionally regarded themselves as more important in religion. She has this to say, “Men in traditional Shona society have constructed a religious language in keeping with a view of themselves as people who matter the most before ancestors.”

Women are central in African religion, notwithstanding their overall subordination. The centrality of women in Shona religion can be noted from their contribution in traditional ceremonies such as the ceremony of bringing back the spirit of the deceased (*kurova guva*), pouring out libations for ancestors (*kupira*) and rain-making ceremonies (*mukwerera*). Women, as aunts (*madzitetete*) and grandmothers (*madzimbuya*) brew beer for drinking at ritual gatherings (Mukonyora 1999:277). Daughters-in-law are assigned the role of washing and carrying pots. Since it is the head of the family, a man, who organises the brewing of beer for family ancestral

spirits (Bourdillon 1993:71), the role of women can be seen as supportive. Bourdillon (1993:71) further argues that traditional patterns of behaviour are reproduced by rituals.

Women are important as custodians of African religion and culture (Jeenah 2004:1; Kanyoro 1999:56). Traditionally, women were custodians of *ngano* (folklore stories) used to encourage harmonious relations among creation and myths that explained the origin of phenomena (Mukonyora 1999:281). Through such folklore, women taught the youth the norms and values of society, including religious beliefs.

Women can also play important roles as spirit mediums and ritual specialists in various religious rituals. Mbuya Nehanda gained respect among the Shona as a 'heroine' spirit medium. She has left a legacy and is regarded as one of the heroes of the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe. She is believed to have inspired the Second Chimurenga⁴ when she uttered the well-known prediction of the Second Chimurenga: "My bones shall rise again." When considering that Mbuya Nehanda's importance was tied to her possession by the ancestor spirit of her patrilineage, one might say her sex or being female was unimportant since she was just a channel of communication. Nevertheless Mbuya Nehanda and other female spirit mediums continue to be respected even when not possessed. At times male members of their lineage listen to these women's advice in running family affairs (Mukonyora 1999:277). Traditionally, each clan or territory had a senior spirit medium who might be either male or female (Chavunduka 1994:63).

As spirit mediums women are also associated with the Mwari⁵ religion (Mukonyora 1999:282). At the Matonjeni shrine near Bulawayo, western Zimbabwe, there is a *mbonga-svikiro* (female spirit medium) who is the channel of communication of the hidden God at the shrine (Mukonyora 1999:282). Mukonyora (1999:282) further states that virgin girls sometimes assist the *mbonga-svikiro* in looking after the shrine. The spokesperson of Mwari at Matonjeni is always a virgin woman, who speaks from a cave. From this it can be inferred that even today women are central as priests in the Mwari religion. However, the choice of virgins as priests at the Mwari cult seems to suggest that motherhood is incompatible with priesthood.

⁴The Second Chimurenga was the second wave of the Liberation struggle against colonialism in Zimbabwe. It began in the 1960s.

⁵Mwari is the Shona term for God, the creator who is ever-existent.

In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, and even today, female traditional healers have enjoyed a high status in society, like their male counterparts. They serve as religious consultants as well as medical practitioners. In spite of modernity, Western education, and embracing of Christianity, many Shona people continue to consult traditional healers when faced with life puzzles or misfortunes (Chavunduka 1994:10). Most of these traditional healers were and are spirit mediums (Chavunduka 1994:1). They obtain their healing powers from ancestral spirits (*midzimu*) or alien spirits (*mashavi*). The establishment, of an association for traditional healers in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers' Association (hereafter ZINATHA) testifies to the recognition of traditional healers by the Government of Zimbabwe. This recognition can also be explained in terms of the role that traditional healers play in society. According to Chavunduka (1994:42), the majority of traditional healers who registered with ZINATHA at its inception were women.

While women do actively participate in African religion, they largely play supportive roles or serve as 'stop-gap personnel' who carry out certain tasks like sacrificing to ancestral spirits in the absence of appropriate male relatives or under spirit possession. The implication seems to be that women are not on par with their male counterparts when it comes to religious leadership. In spite of their subordination, women are seen as important transmitters of religious traditions due to their role as teachers and moral agents.

2.4 STATUS OF WOMEN IN AFRICAN CULTURE

The status of women in African society shall be discussed under the following main headings: African women in the family, decision-making in both public and private spheres, and the interface between the status of women in African society and domestic violence. The thread that links all these aspects is the headship of males. It is worth noting that African society is not static but dynamic hence some changes in the role of women can be expected. As Suda (1996:79) observes, "Contemporary Africa is undergoing dramatic changes with concomitant shifts in the role and status of women." However, in spite of these changes, male dominance and female subordination still prevail (Townsend 2008:30; Kethusegile et al 2000:68). This resonates with Kosomo's (2010:128) claim that within the context of many African societies, women have traditionally played a passive role.

2.4.1 African women and the family

2.4.1.1 Marriage

Significance of marriage and the family

The family is highly valued in Shona culture. Like many other African societies, the Shona society perceives marriage as the focus of existence. It is based on blood relationships. The extended family⁶ is important for the Shona. This family consists of a husband and his wife or wives, children and other relatives including aunts, uncles, nephews, cousins, and grandparents. The family is set up through the institution of marriage. Marriage is an expectation embedded in culture (Kambarami 2006:3). A person of marriageable age is expected to get married and start a family. Celibacy is not encouraged as marriage is considered a natural goal of both sexes. As with the Yoruba (Ola-Aluko & Edewor 2002:19), Shona marriage is regarded as a contract between two families, the wife-giving family and the wife-receiving family (Bourdillon 1998:41). Since marriage allies two distinct individuals and therefore two distinct families, it can be viewed as of political significance (Chetty 2005:202).

Shona marriage is by its very nature a patriarchal institution. Since the Shona society is hierarchical and patriarchal, the husband is the head of the family. All Shona men benefit from what Connell (1995:79) terms 'the patriarchal dividend' whereupon men in general gain from the overall subordination of women. This is apparent from the Shona terms for marriage. In the Shona culture the man marries (*kuroora*) and the woman gets married (*kuroorwa*). The two Shona terms in brackets imply acquiring and being acquired, respectively. As such, the man acquires and the woman is acquired; a notion that is reinforced by the husband's payment of *roora* or *lobola*⁷. Male leadership and domination are traditional and taken for granted (Burn 2005:263; Bourdillon 1993:30; Hatendi 1973:137). The implication of this is that a good wife is one who is subservient and obedient to her husband, the head of the family. Under customary law⁸ a wife and children belong to the husband and his relatives (Tichagwa

⁶While the nuclear family consists of parents and their biological children, the extended family consists of these and a wider group of close relatives (Bourdillon, 1993:19).

⁷*Roora* or *lobola* is a custom practised by many ethnic societies in Africa and involves the groom or his family giving money, goods or livestock to the parents of the bride (Burn 2005:24). Thus *lobola* involves some payment from the groom or his family to the bride's family (Chireshe & Chireshe 2010:211). *Roora* and *lobola* are equivalent terms for bridewealth, hence throughout they are used interchangeably.

⁸Customary law, according to Ndulo (2011:88), is the indigenous law of the various ethnic groups of Africa and has its source in the practices and customs of African people.

1998:43). In the traditional set up and under customary Shona law a woman is a perpetual minor, with parents or male relatives having control of her before marriage and the husband upon her marriage.

Polygamy (barika)

Shona customary marriage is potentially polygamous. In Shona society polygamy has been justified on the basis of socio-economic and moral reasons. Traditionally having many wives and many children was a status symbol (Chetty 2005:204). It signified the amount of power and influence one had in the society. It is no wonder that chiefs had several wives. Traditionally, when clans used to raid one another women who were captured became the extra wives of the men who captured them (Gelfand 1999:177). The other reason for polygamy was the desire to enlarge the clan so that it (the clan) could defend itself against attack from outside (Gelfand 1999:177). Monogamy was believed to promote adultery because traditionally after giving birth, a woman was supposed to refrain from having sexual relations with her husband for some time. During this time the husband would get sexual relief from other wives.

There is a traditional belief that after menopause a woman should not continue to have sexual intercourse as this might endanger both sexual partners (Gelfand 1999:177). In this case polygamy was called for. In some cases the first wife suggested the marriage of a second wife when she saw that she had passed the childbearing age. Wife inheritance (*kugara nhaka*) also promoted polygamy. Although this practice is declining because of legislation that has given women more rights, education and economic challenges, it is still a reality in some Shona communities. A poor man might pledge one of his daughters to a wealthy man, who already has a wife or wives so as to be saved from starvation or to get relief from a heavy debt (Gelfand 1999:185). Nowadays child pledging is an offence punishable by law but in spite of its illegality, it is still practised, though to a lesser extent. Some Apostolic sects allegedly practice it but reports of young girls running away from arranged marriages are a pointer to the decline of the practice among those groups where it is still upheld. Various child-friendly organisations such as Childline Zimbabwe and Save the Children UK-Zimbabwe assist young girls to abandon abusive situations including forced, arranged marriages (Anon Sa).

While a woman may have only one spouse, a husband can have more than one wife at a time. Wives in a polygamous marriage often have to compete for the husband's attention and material support (Lipinge & Lebeau 2005:8). It is not surprising that accusations of witchcraft among co-wives are a reality in a number of polygamous families among the Shona. Wives competing for the same husband become rivals, hence when one of the wives falls sick or encounters some misfortune, it is likely that she will accuse the co-wife or one of the co-wives of having bewitched her or having cast a spell on her.

Polygamy reinforces women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections as it legitimises multiple sexual relationships (Lipinge & Lebeau 2005:32). Today, there is a decline in polygamy in the Shona society due to Christian influence and modernisation (Bourdillon 1993:23). However, although polygamy is declining, mistresses or extra-marital affairs ('outside wives') are replacing many wives (Townsend 2008:39; Chetty 2005:204). Extra-marital affairs, also sarcastically referred to as 'small houses' in Zimbabwe, are becoming more fashionable, threatening the sanctity of the marriage institution and exposing both husbands and their wives to the risk of HIV infection.

Gender role socialisation in the family

The family is the primary agent of gender role socialisation wherein children are taught societal norms and values, especially how they are expected to behave as either male or female. This gender role socialisation leads to stereotypes. Stereotypes help to maintain the status quo, for example, in Shona society men are considered as strong, decision-makers and not vulnerable while women are considered weak and vulnerable (Townsend 2008:19). Such stereotyping has the effect of perceiving women as those who serve, who have to abide by the decisions of their husbands. This creates a fertile ground for the domination, exploitation, and oppression of women within the family. Kambarami (2006:2) views the family as "a *brewery* for patriarchal practices" where girls are taught to be subservient and boys to be dominant. In this connection, Kosomo (2010:128) suggests that gender socialisation impedes parity between males and females.

Marriage and kinship

Kinship is based on blood relations. The Shona consider kinship through males as more important than kinship through females. As such, descent is traced through the male line hence patrilineal. This patrilineal descent forms a vital basis for cooperation (Mutswairo, Masasire, Mberi, Furusa & Chiwome 1996:41). Clans, which are often made up of several families believed to have emanated from a common ancestor, are found in the Shona society. While patrilineal descent is thus vital, it is worth noting that the mother's relatives are also important and may at times be closer in social relationships.

Upon marriage the bride leaves her parents and home to join the bridegroom's family-group and she is expected to be subordinate, subservient, industrious and faithful (Hatendi 1973:137). However, the wife remains an alien (*mutorwa*) in her husband's family on the ground that she was not born in that family, that is, she has no kinship ties with her husband's family.

Childbearing and children

Children are central in marriage and family life in Shona culture, hence the centrality of motherhood/mothering. Procreation is the chief goal of marriage, making marriage and procreation a unit (Masuku 2005:81). For this reason, a woman gains status as a result of childbearing and childrearing (Tichagwa 1998:50; Bourdillon 1998:47). As in other African cultures, for instance Zulu culture (Masuku 2005:81), traditional Shona marriage is only considered complete when the woman has borne her husband at least one child (Mutswairo et al 1996:46). Children thus ratify the marriage contract between her family and that of her husband, thus completing her status as an adult woman. Seen from this perspective, procreation is 'the flower of marriage' (Hatendi 1973:137). Given that procreation brings joy into the marriage, a childless marriage in both traditional and modern Shona society is almost always a bitter disappointment (Gelfand 1999:175). The production of offspring enhances the clan of the husband by carrying the family name to posterity (Ebere 2011:487; Burn 2005:21; Tsanga 1999:56; Gelfand 1999:175; Bourdillon 1998:47; Chavunduka 1994:67; Ngcanga 1987:5). It is important that the clan should grow, because "the bigger the clan the stronger it becomes" (Gelfand 1999:175).

The value of children, especially males, is also tied to social security in old age (Mabasa 2002:110; Gelfand 1999:175). Thus, children are highly valued as economic asserts and old-age insurance. Men are also concerned that infertility will deprive them of heirs to inherit their estate when they die (Mabasa 2002:110).

Furthermore, children affirm womanhood and manhood (Mabasa 2002:110; Ngcanga 1987:5). In this regard it can be said that childbearing proves a woman to be a real woman and a man to be a real man (Masuku 2005:81), thus raising the status of both men and women. In addition, both husband and wife are reproduced, biologically, in their children, thus ensuring the continued existence of the human race (Masuku 2005:81). Masuku (2005:81) further asserts “A person who, therefore, has no descendents in effect quenches the fire of life, and dies forever since his line of physical continuation is blocked.” Since children are of paramount importance as the basis of the survival, expansion and extension of the kinship group, the value of childbearing cannot be overemphasised (Masuku 2005:81; Tichagwa 1998:43). Childbearing thus satisfies a man’s demand for him to extend the family tree and this need to ensure continuity of life sometimes propels men to engage in extra-marital relationships in the hope of getting children, especially males, when their marriages fail to produce children (Mabasa 2002:98).

More to serving as the basis of the survival and extension of the kinship group, childbearing has a religious significance among the Shona. It is a sacred obligation. The Shona belief in ancestral spirits explains why it is necessary to have children who will remember their parents and grandparents who are dead, who become *midzimu* (ancestral spirits). The children would pray and offer sacrifices to these ancestral spirits. To qualify to be an ancestral spirit one must have left behind children of one’s own (Chavunduka 1994:57).

The centrality of children and childbearing engenders the stigmatisation of barrenness, which is often attached to women. In most African societies to be without a child is to be considered a lesser person (Kanyoro 1999:66). Barrenness is often attributed to the wife in Shona society in spite of the fact that the Shona term ‘*ngomwa*’ applies to both males and females who are barren. While it is possible for a man to conceal his barrenness, it is not so with a woman who has to fall pregnant and give birth. When it is established that the man is sterile, arrangements could be made for his younger

brother or nephew (*muzukuru*) to have sex relations with his wife and bear him children (Gelfand 1999:175). Although this practice is waning due to Christian influence, it has not disappeared.

Barrenness on the part of the wife is regarded as a “failure by her and her family to fulfil their side of the marriage contract” (Chavunduka 1994:67). It needs to be reiterated here that a woman who has given birth to females only is valued less than one who has a number of boys because male children are preferred to female children.

Bourdillon (1998:47) suggests that the payment of *lobola* transfers a woman’s rights over her children to her husband. The point is reiterated by Tsanga (1999:56) who also links childbearing with *lobola* when she argues “The primary reason for the payment of *lobola* or *roora* is to compensate the family of the bride for the loss of their daughter who will now belong to the husband’s family for the purpose of bearing children.” The children take on their father’s surname, totem as well as citizenship. Thus by virtue of payment of *lobola*, both the wife and children belong to the husband (Kambarami 2006:8). This explains why, in the case of divorce, children customarily remain in the custody of their father. In light of this, fear of losing custody of their children may force abused women to stay in abusive relationships in order to remain with their children.

2.4.1.2 Roora/ lobola and the status of women

Lobola or roora has both positive and negative connotations for women. From an Afro-centric perspective, *lobola* is perceived positively as a cementing force that unites families, thus bringing formerly unrelated families into close relationship (Kethusegile et al 2000:68). Traditionally, *lobola* was a protection of the rights of both men and women (Townsend 2008:34), signifying a lasting relationship. It was a symbol of respect for the woman and gratitude to the woman’s family (Chireshe & Chireshe 2010:216; Gelfand 1999:177; Bourdillon 1993:36). Gelfand’s (1999:177) high regard for *roora* is expressed in the following citation:

I personally would look on the payment of bridewealth as having the effect of giving the woman a value in the eyes of all especially the man. Here is a person who has a value; someone who cannot just be taken.

Lobola validates a marriage (Bourdillon 1993:36) such that where *lobola* has not been paid to the woman’s family, society does not recognise the union as a marriage. The

woman is stigmatised as *mukadzi wemapoto* (literally, a wife of pots), which implies that she is just a cook (someone in a temporary relationship) and not a homemaker (someone in a lasting relationship). The relationship looks like casual sex or prostitution (Bourdillon 1993:36). In this connection, Bourdillon (1993:38) states that *lobola* or bridewealth gives status to women in traditional marriages.

Due to the custom of *lobola*, girl children are regarded as a source of wealth among the Shona. To some, especially those of a feminist orientation, this may sound like the commoditisation of human beings. This perception is in keeping with Wiley's (2009:363) view that *lobola* signifies the commoditisation of women wherein women serve as subjects of economic transactions between men. As already noted, *lobola* has both positive and negative connotations for the girl. On the one hand *lobola* signifies her worth as a human being and on the other, it signifies her commoditisation, a source of wealth. A girl child is sometimes referred to as '*chiriman'ombe*' (literally one who exercises cattle farming) in the sense that she is expected to get married and earn *lobola* for her family in form of cattle. A similar idea is reflected by an expression uttered when adult females are playing with a baby girl. It goes, "*kura kura baba vadye n'ombe*" (Shona, literally meaning, grow up so that your father can consume cattle), which implies the expectation for a girl to get married and earn her father *lobola*, which is expected to come in the form of cattle.

Negatively, the custom is often abused to give the husband and his family a sense of ownership of the wife. In this regard *lobola* is viewed as a source of oppression for women and as such a cause for concern among feminists of various persuasions. Reiterating the negative impact of *lobola*, Ndulo (2011:94) concedes "*Lobola* has become what Westerners alleged was a 'bride price' and has ceased to be a source of African pride."

Coupled with patriarchal attitudes, *lobola* has become the basis of oppression of women by men (Chireshe & Chireshe 2010:218; Townsend 2008:34; UNICEF 2007:45; Kambarami 2006:8). Ntsimane (2006:30) describes *lobola* as "...the formal transaction that cements women's social dependence upon men." This is due to the fact that when some men pay *lobola*, they have a feeling that they have bought the women and so are entitled to control their wives, having the right of decision-making over them. Gelfand (1999:29) argues that the practice of *lobola* gives the man rights

over his wife to the extent that if she errs he may mete out punishment. In a similar vein, Tsanga (1999:101) states “A man who has paid *lobola* acquires the status of a demigod who has the right to punish his subject if the subject fails to remain subordinate.” It is often believed that *lobola* gives a husband the right to control his wife’s behaviour. As such, the woman becomes a man’s possession by virtue of *lobola* (Townsend 2008:34; Burn 2005:24; Kethusegile et al 2000:165). Today *lobola* signifies the commoditisation of women, having implications of buying and selling. In this connection, Ndulo (2011:94) maintains that *lobola* has become an instrument of male dominance and exploitation. Seen from this perspective, *lobola*, which is a key essential of customary law marriage, entrenches gender inequality.

In spite of the negative impact of *lobola* payment, the custom is still held in high esteem as an aspect of the cultural heritage of the Shona (Chireshe & Chireshe 2010:215). Many women show a commitment to *lobola* because it represents, for them, “a sense of commitment and love of the man” (Posel, Rudwick & Casale 2011:108).

2.4.1.3 Property rights and inheritance

Traditionally, family property is the husband’s property. Husband and wife are not married in community of property, that is, they cannot own property jointly because family property belongs to the husband (Gelfand 1999:31). Only limited property belonged to the wife, for example ‘motherhood cows’⁹ and any property she earns if she is a traditional healer since a woman’s healing powers are believed to come from her ancestral spirits (Gelfand 1999:32). According to Shona customary law a woman’s earnings, even in modern occupations, belong to her husband. This may lead to the husband taking control, which may result in economic violence.

Under customary law land is allocated to an adult male who is married. A woman can only own land through a male or males (Townsend 2008:39). In this regard, males are the guardians of the land, that is, they have custody of the land. By implication, although women are a majority of those who work in the fields, they do not have property rights as far as land is concerned. Communal land is under the possession of males.

⁹ Motherhood cows are cows a woman receives when her daughters marry. For each married daughter a woman receives one cow. The more the married daughters, the more the cows a woman gets. On the other hand a woman with boys only would not have that privilege.

In traditional Shona society women have limited inheritance rights as this is the prerogative of males. Under the customary law of succession, males are preferred as heirs (Ndulo 2011:111) because females are expected to get married at some point and so leave their natal families. Customarily, if the father dies, the eldest son becomes the head of the household and the mother is expected to consult him.

Although the Deceased Persons Family Maintenance (Amendment) Act seeks to protect the wife (or wives) and children of a deceased man, according to Shona custom the husband's family may claim his property (Townsend 2008:45).

According to Shona customs, when a husband dies, the widow is expected to marry one of the close relatives of the deceased. The widow's non-compliance renders her vulnerable to expulsion from her matrimonial home, leaving children behind (Kambarami 2006:8). Although forced wife inheritance is now illegal in Zimbabwe (according to the Domestic Violence Act, Zimbabwe 2006, Section 3 subsection 1), and although there is a decline in levirate marriages (widow inheritance), some Shona women still find themselves in this predicament.

In today's environment, some Shona women evade being inherited by their husbands' male relatives by choosing to be inherited by their eldest sons. They do this to ensure that their late husbands' estate remains under their control (Bourdillon 1998:51). In this way, they become heirs to their late husbands' estate.

2.4.1.4 Divorce

Divorce, the separation of husband and wife, is not encouraged in Shona society (Bourdillon 1998:134). However, there are situations that give rise to it. It appears that divorcing a spouse is the prerogative of the man who is supposed to give his wife a token of divorce (*gupuro*) in the event that he divorces his wife. Divorce is associated with loss especially for women—"loss of friends and family; loss of status, possibly loss of children and sometimes loss of financial security" (Kitson 1992:18). Divorce is often viewed as a failure on the part of the wife, resulting in her stigmatisation (Mukonyora 1999:278). Mukonyora (1999:278) further states that a divorced woman is unwanted at her husband's home and is accepted with reluctance in her patrilineal home.

Since children are regarded as belonging to their father and his ancestors, a woman customarily leaves children behind upon her divorce. Furthermore, since marriage and motherhood are highly valued in Shona society, divorce represents failure in the roles of wife and mother. Faced with domestic violence, women are unlikely to leave an abusive situation for fear of stigmatisation and the resultant marginalisation as divorced women. In the Shona context, single women do not get the same respect as married women. Married women have some kind of “shield against social judgements” and as such, when a woman is divorced, she loses her ‘shield’ (Gharaibeh & Oweis 2009:381).

2.4.2 Decision-making in both public and private spheres

In the public sphere decision-making was traditionally the prerogative of men but sometimes women were consulted by their husbands in private. In this connection, a man who publicly asserted his decision capacity would consult his wife in private. One can thus argue that Shona women have always been influential in decision-making but this influence was not legitimated.

Although in Shona society a woman could acquire a position of high standing, the traditional norm has always been male dominance and female subservience in decision-making (Bourdillon 1998:52). Chieftainship is largely the domain of males. In principle, it passes from the eldest to the youngest brother in turn. Thereafter, it returns to the eldest son of the eldest brother (Chavunduka 1994:60).

Since Zimbabwean independence from colonial rule in 1980 a number of women-friendly laws have been put in place to improve the status of women. In legal terms, women have acquired parity with men as the Legal Age of Majority Act (No. 15 of 1982) officially gives both men and women full adult status upon attaining the age of eighteen. According to Bourdillon (1993:57) the Act in question was enacted to protect women’s rights and “effect some checks on men’s power.” However, in spite of such legal changes men continue to dominate in decision making in various spheres of life (Orebiyi 2002:109). Women’s views are often treated as less important than those of men, evidenced by the fact that in most cases where male and female candidates contest for election, it is usually the man who acquires more votes. As Townsend (2008:19) states, “Men are expected to be more visible than women.”

Society still associates leadership and decision-making with men in spite of gender awareness campaigns and legal reforms aimed at achieving gender equality. Underscoring the ineffectiveness of legislation in addressing gender inequality, Bourdillon (1993:58) has this to say, “While the formal authority of men over women has been weakened by legislation which asserts the rights of women, the power of men over women is not weakened.” Social and economic factors continue to impede the full realisation of gender equality. Men’s appeal to culture and tradition to assert their authority is a case in point.

Within the context of the family, men have the final say on family matters. As family head, the man is the ultimate decision-maker (Bourdillon 1993:30). The traditional definitions of husband and wife, as decision-maker and homemaker respectively, are still strong (Chalfant & LaBeff 1988:230). Since customary law subjects women to male domination, decision-making at household level remains in the hands of men (Kethusegile et al 2000:68). Despite the fact that in rural areas men are usually away from home because of employment in towns or abroad, they still make family decisions.

Women, as aunts, played and still play a prominent role as intermediaries between children and their fathers during marriage proceedings of the children concerned (Bourdillon 1998: 31). In addition, aunts, together with grandmothers, have usually advised girls about womanhood. However, these women’s decision-making power is limited by males who have the final say on matters pertaining to their children.

Traditionally, men sat at a *dare* (discussion forum) from which women were excluded. Important family matters were discussed here. Such matters obviously included women but they (women) were not part of the forum. One Shona woman, a teacher by profession (personal correspondent) remarked, “In traditional society, women were supposed to be seen and not heard.”

Shona men recognise the importance of women in the family although they sometimes overlook their suggestions or do not consult them. This is testified to by a number of Shona sayings and beliefs. The saying ‘*musha mukadzi*’ suggests that there is no home without a mother, making a woman, as a wife and mother, the essence of a home. For a man to be allocated land in Shona traditional systems he had to have a wife, the reason being that it is the mother or wife that is central to the household

(Muwati, Gambahaya & Gwekwerere 2011:3; Rukuni 2007:53). While both parents ought to be honoured, it is considered a taboo to offend one's mother. There is a belief that if someone offends his or her own mother and the mother dies with a grievance, the mother will come back as an avenging spirit (*ngozi*) to punish the offender. This experience is degrading on the part of the offender (Muwati et al 2011:4).

The importance of the mother and her kinship group is reiterated by the saying "*Zamu guru ndorokwamai*" (literally, the mother's lineage has a bigger breast), implying that one's maternal relatives can be more supportive than one's paternal relatives. Underscoring the importance of the mother is another Shona proverb "*Nherera inoguta musu wafa mai*" which, according to Muwati et al (2011:4) means that the death of one's mother signifies vulnerability, "the end of satiation." Furthermore, the importance of the mother is evidenced by the fact that African men will fight to defend their mothers (Kanyoro 1999:64).

What can be noted from the preceding exposition is the ambivalent status accorded to African women in decision-making processes. However, given the patriarchal nature of Shona society, it is ultimately men who are on top.

Customary law and gender inequality in the family

This section can best be seen as summative, as it synthesises gender relations in various aspects of life of the Shona. The section is a culmination of the discussion on preceding aspects, showing, in general terms, the interface between customary law and general or common law as they intersect with gender equality.

Despite legal reforms aimed at enhancing gender equality, women's social and economic status continues to be defined by customary rules (Gopal & Salim 1998:2), rendering such efforts ineffective. This point is clearly articulated by Munro (1994:45) who states that customary law exists alongside common law within the Zimbabwean context and that "efforts by women to exercise rights under new legislation have met resistance from men who use customary law to retain control over them." In this connection it can be said that customary law of the Shona subjects women to male domination. Customary law is often discriminatory as it tends to see women as appendages of men instead of treating them as equals (Ndulo 2011:89; Armstrong 1998:16). In this regard women are given second-class status.

While a great deal has thus been achieved in removing legal discrimination against women, women still face discrimination as a result of societal beliefs and practices (Kethusegile et al 2000:68). In Zimbabwe this is exacerbated by the fact that the constitution upholds the application of customary law. Given that customary practices are often discriminatory against women, the application of customary law alongside laws aimed at enhancing gender equality often leaves women in a vulnerable position. Furthermore, the centrality of customary law to Africans in general and the Shona in particular, results in the repulsion of efforts to reform African laws. Such efforts are often prone to being interpreted as “an effort to impose Western values on African societies” (Ndulo 2011:94). The repulsion needs to be understood in light of the perception of customary law as part and parcel of people’s identity and culture. Since customary law is passed down from birth, it is more readily accepted than law “which has been imposed from outside” (Townsend 2008:30). In this regard, common law, often perceived as Western, is often spurned. It is not only men who resist reforms to customary law. Women, the intended beneficiaries of gender-sensitive legal reforms, sometimes view such reforms as doing more harm than good to society. Townsend (2008:30) explains that this is due to the internalisation of patriarchal values by both men and women. This resonates with Ntlama’s (2010:20) argument that the internalisation of cultural beliefs and practices by both men and women impede the implementation of women-friendly laws.

2.4.3 Interface between the status of women in African society and domestic violence

Cultural contexts influence the way in which violence is conceptualised. Such contexts influence forms, experiences, consequences and reaction to domestic violence (Devine & Deneulin 2011:63; Bradley 2010:362; Joubert-Wallis 2008:25; Wendt 2008:144; Maclachlan 1997:9). Violence can serve as a useful instrument of sustaining male power. While domestic violence, especially wife beating, is not encouraged among the Shona, it is often condoned on cultural grounds. Domestic violence is rooted in the belief that a man has a right to control his wife, his children and his entire household (Armstrong 1998:8).

Since religion and culture are often invoked to safeguard and perpetuate male dominance, they often collude in creating a fertile ground for the abuse of women.

Sweetman (1998:2) alludes to this point when she argues, “Custom and tradition, often justified on religious grounds, ensure women’s conformity to conventional gender roles, which can be a source of powerlessness and pain.” Men use violence to assert control; they become violent when their status as family heads is threatened (Partab 2011:103; Clowes et al 2010:15; Mwamwenda 1995:482). Bowman (2003:851) argues that domestic violence within the African context is invariably linked to pervasive gender inequality. Some African customs and traditions such as *lobola* explain the widespread incidence of domestic violence (Bowman 2003:853). A man who has paid *lobola* feels that he has the right to punish his wife if he perceives her as not subordinate enough.

Shona society is characterised by changing norms and values, changing expectations towards women and marriage as well as changing socio-economic conditions which may lead to violence as men attempt to reassert their dominance (Armstrong 1998:135). Customary law seems to support male claims on dominance in spite of legislation to promote gender equality. Although legally women have equal rights, they are socially subordinated and therefore in a weak and vulnerable position (De Lange 2006:79). Abusive men and their supporters fall back on culture to justify their behaviour (Kethusegile et al 2000:68). As such, the feminist movement, whose general goals are to challenge patriarchal systems and affirm the dignity and worth of women, is viewed with suspicion as “a movement bent on taking over men’s God-given power” (Amoah 2007:96). In this connection, Maluleke and Nadar (2002:7) talk of a covenant of violence between societies and abusive men. Armstrong (1998:8), writing about Zimbabwean women survivors of domestic violence, points out that culture is an excuse for domestic violence as abusers cite culture to justify their abusive behaviour. Thus, men may cite unwifely behaviour on the part of their wives to defend their violent acts (Partab 2011:103; Burman et al 2004:346). As a consequence, some abused women may believe abuse is their fault.

Because of socialisation on the virtue of silence, abused women often shy away from speaking about abuse. There are some Shona sayings that discourage women from speaking out about domestic abuse. For example, “*Chakafukidza dzimba matenga*” (Literally, houses are covered by roofs) and “*usafukura hapwa*” (Literally, do not expose your armpit). Both sayings underscore the value of keeping family secrets and

not divulging them to the public. Thus speaking out about domestic violence results in the possible loss of social approval (Burn 2005:218; Burman et al 2004:344).

The perception of a married Shona woman as *mutorwa* (alien or stranger) in her husband's family makes her vulnerable to many abuses (Getecha & Chipika 1995:148).

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to discuss the role of women in African Religion and culture, with specific reference to the Shona which is the background of participants in the current study. While religion and culture are difficult to separate in the context of traditional society, an attempt was made to discuss them separately. Justification for the inclusion of this chapter was given and it was highlighted that African indigenous (traditional) religion and culture provide the context in which Christianity and Islam were implanted among the Shona. In consequence, it can be argued that this background of the Shona shapes their reception and interpretation of Christian and Islamic teachings, especially within the framework of domestic violence, which is central to the present study. The chapter showed how women are both elevated and marginalised in African Religion and culture.

The thrust of the forthcoming chapter is the status and role of women in Christianity.

CHAPTER 3: STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN CHRISTIANITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of the status and role of women in religion has attracted much attention from people of various persuasions. The diversity in religious beliefs and practices suggests diversity in the ways women are depicted and treated in religion, including attitudes and responses to domestic violence. The gist of this chapter is to examine the status and role of women in Christianity, taking into consideration diversity within the Christian faith. Since the role of an individual has a bearing on how the individual concerned is treated in that context, it becomes imperative to consider literature on the role of women in religion bearing in mind that the status accorded to women in any context has bearing on their experiences of domestic violence. Focus will be on a number of issues, namely, the status of women in comparison with men in society and religious community as depicted by the scriptures, as interpreted by theologians and as interpreted by contemporary religious practitioners, that is, the contemporary Christian church. In addition, as the chapter unfolds what is considered appropriate behaviour for women in Christian scriptures as well as Christian communities will surface.

3.2 BIBLICAL INJUNCTIONS ON THE STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN

My analysis is not an in-depth exegesis but is an attempt to indicate which scriptural texts are used by proponents and opponents of gender equality. The ambivalent use of scriptures is articulated by Fiorenza (1995a:8) who argues that while on the one hand the Bible has been used to halt the emancipation of women, slaves and colonized, on the other hand it has provided theological support for Christian women and men who rejected slavery, poverty and patriarchal sexism as against God's will. Furthermore, Fiorenza (1995a:8) points out that "while clergymen invoked the Bible ... in order to bar women from speaking in public and in order to prevent the ordination of women, women have pointed to other biblical texts to legitimise their claim to public speaking and the ministry". In her final analysis Fiorenza (1995a:9) posits that both detractors and defenders of women's liberation refer to the Bible because of its "ecclesial authority and societal influence". It is in view of the centrality of biblical texts in

Christianity that this section focuses on biblical injunctions on the status and role of women.

3.2.1 The book of Genesis

According to the creation narrative in Genesis 1, God created humankind in his image. Verse 27 states that “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” After the creation of humankind God gave them authority to dominate his creation. The verse seems to imply that the relationship between man and woman is that of equal partnership and that man and woman were to be co-rulers of nature. This verse is often quoted by those who support gender equality to illustrate that the two genders were intended to be on a par (Claassens 2008:49; Nasimiyu-Wasike 1991:75; Njoroge 2005:29; Oduyoye 1995:6; Rakoczy 2008:140).

Genesis 2 seems to contradict what has gone before. Now there is only reference to ‘man’ and not to the fact that God created man and woman as in the previous chapter. This text suggests that what motivated God to create Eve was Adam’s loneliness. God saw that it was not good for a man to be alone (verse 18). Eve was created as a suitable helper (*ezer*) for Adam. Eve was created from Adam’s rib (verse 21 and 22) because she was to be like him and be part of him. Adam refers to Eve as ‘bone of my bones’ and ‘flesh of my flesh’ (verse 23) and calls her woman because she was drawn from him. That Eve was drawn out of Adam presents Adam as the prototype of humanity. The text goes further saying that since Eve was made out of Adam, man and woman were to leave their parents and join each other to become one flesh (verse 24). While Adam is depicted as having primacy to Eve in terms of creation, Adam needs Eve. The reference to Eve as Adam’s helper may imply that the woman was to take instructions from the man, being subordinate to him. On the other hand, the phrases ‘bone of my bones’ and ‘flesh of my flesh’ seem to imply equality between the sexes. That Adam names Eve may imply that Adam has authority over Eve because the power to name is tied to the power to define. In view of the preceding analysis, the text seems to support both the subordination of women as well as their equality with men. It would not be surprising, therefore, that both proponents of gender equality and those of gender inequality would use this same text to substantiate their positions.

Genesis 3 explains how sin and punishment came into the world. Verse 6 shows how Eve was deceived into eating the forbidden fruit by the serpent and how she also gave the fruit to her husband who also ate it. For violating God's law both Adam and Eve were punished. While Adam was to work hard to get food, Eve was to suffer in childbearing and was to be subservient to Adam (Genesis 3:16). Adam was to rule over her. In the context of this passage, male dominance comes as a punishment for Eve's disobedience, for being the first deserter of the divine law. The Christian concept of the original sin emanates from this passage, which is often referred to as the account of the Fall. The text seems to suggest that prior to sinning in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were equals, but Eve lost her equal status because she was the first to be deceived by the serpent into violating God's law. Adam and Eve lost the comfort of the Garden and so had to work hard to survive. In this passage we see the disruption of the harmony that used to prevail prior to the coming of sin. Negative attitudes towards women are partly explicable in terms of this passage. The woman is depicted as the one through whom humanity lost comfort and an everlasting life.

3.2.2 The hierarchical relationship

In 1 Corinthians 11:3-12 a leadership hierarchy is depicted. God is the ultimate leader, followed by Christ, man and lastly woman at the bottom of the hierarchy (verse 3). Headship signifies authority over or rule over. Every man has a direct relationship with Christ whereas a woman's relationship with Christ is an indirect one. The man rules over the woman. Since women's relationship with Christ is not direct, women take orders from men who in turn take orders Christ who in turn takes orders from God. Women submit to men while men submit to Christ who in turn submits to God. Verse 7 refers to head covering during public worship. The verse says that it is a sign of dishonour for one's head if a man prophesies and prays with his head covered whereas the opposite is true for a woman. The verse has it that a woman ought to cover her head as she is the image and glory of man whereas the man is the image and glory of God. The woman according to this verse does not possess the image of God and as such she can only be an indirect image by virtue of her relationship with the man who is the image of God. The verse also seems to imply that men and women do not have the same value before God; a man, who is God's direct image, is superior to the woman who is not. Verse 8 shows the rationale behind the creation of women. The

woman, according to this verse, was created as an existential necessity for the man, to serve the man. The verse further indicates that the woman is for the man, she belongs to him but the man does not belong to the woman.

The implication of the passage seems to be that whereas a woman is man's possession, the man is not woman's possession. It can also be extrapolated that a man has a right to make decisions for a woman but the woman does not enjoy such rights. As such, the woman is to be at the service of the man. Since the woman belongs to the man, she is not supposed to have more than one husband whereas the man, who is not of the woman, can have more than one wife. Being of the man, the woman has to dance according to the tune of the man. Also implicit in the verse is that since a woman is a man's possession, the man can dispose of her as he wishes. Since the woman has been created for the man (verse 9) she is there to gratify his needs without questioning the man on what he does.

Verse 11, which seems to contradict verse 8 and 9, shows the complementarity of the sexes. The verse seems to suggest that the man needs the woman as much as the woman needs the man. However, even within this framework of complementarity it would appear that the man has the upper hand and that while he can dispense with the woman, the woman cannot dispense of him because, as verses 8 and 9 suggest, she is his possession. In verse 11 Paul seems to move a bit away from his earlier position that the woman entirely belongs to the man. However, although it is a woman who gives birth to a man, it appears the gist of the passage is that man is superior to the woman who is his possession. Texts such as these are often used to justify the suppression of women in different settings, secular and religious (Monyatsi 2008:248).

3.2.3 The virtuous wife

In Proverbs (31:10-27) there is a description of a virtuous wife. She is one who does good all the days of her life (verse 12). She is hardworking and provides for her household (verse 19), is generous (verse 20) and because of her virtuosity her husband's status in the community is raised (verse 23). The passage indicates that the wife has to please her husband all the days of his life. The wife's joy seems to be deferred to the future (verse 25) while that of the husband should be experienced here

and now. The wife is there to serve her husband, in anticipation of joy in the world to come. The husband's joy is this-worldly in orientation whereas that of the wife is otherworldly. For the good wife, the needs of others, here represented by the husband and children, take precedence over her own needs. Masenya (1997:63) states that the wife's expected responsibility to protect the interests of her husband leads to the subordination of women if it is not met with reciprocity, that is, if the husband does not make an effort to protect the interests of his wife. While Masenya (1997:64) thus sees oppressive tendencies in the text, but she argues that there are also liberative elements, for example, taking full responsibility for the household which she views as empowering. However, she is quick to note that leaving women with no option but to be housewives might be dehumanising. She also states that while being industrious is virtuous, it soon becomes oppressive when expected of women alone.

In Titus 2:4-5 young women are to be sober and love their husbands and be good wives who keep the home and are obedient to their husbands. The theme of female submissiveness surfaces here. Women are advised to keep the home, suggesting that the woman's place is the private, domestic sphere. Although the text is silent, it can be inferred that the place of men is the public sphere. The text indicates that when a wife obeys her husband she will be obeying God. On the other hand if she is disobedient, she will be disobeying God. In essence, the passage shows that homemaking/keeping and subservience are the key attributes of a good wife. By implication, preference for outdoor activities and disobedience to the husband shows that a woman is bad.

3.2.4 The household code

3.2.4.1 Ephesians 5:22-25

The text is an instruction for wives to submit to their own husbands, that is, not to every man. Since a woman ought to submit to her husband in everything (verse 22 and 24), it is implied that she should not question him concerning what he does and says. The reason given for the wife's submission is that the husband is the head of the wife. The text is reminiscent of 1 Corinthians 11:3 where a hierarchy of power is given in which the man is the head of the woman. In this text, the relationship between husband and wife is analogous to that of Christ and the church. Just as the church is subservient to and dependent on Christ, the wife should submit to and depend on her husband in everything. According to verse 24, the wife's submission

should be unconditional and unlimited. By implication, the verse suggests that the wife ought to do as the husband pleases regardless of whether it is right or wrong. Furthermore, it can be extrapolated that the verse implies that the husband always does and commands what is right, that is, does not err, hence the need for the wife to be subservient to him in everything. Verse 25 exhorts husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Implicit here is Christ's sacrificial love. When verse 25 is read in the light of the preceding verses, the whole text (verse 22-25) seems to indicate that while the husband has to love his wife, the wife ought to respond by being submissive. What if the husband does not show love to his wife or, alternatively, what if the wife is not subservient enough to her husband? The text is silent on these matters but it can be inferred that these issues have a bearing on family relations, especially matrimonial harmony and domestic violence.

3.2.4.2 Colossians 3:18-19

These two verses consolidate Paul's earlier teaching on female submissiveness. Verse 18 suggests that the subordination of wives to their own husbands is an order that God himself has set. Failure to submit to one's husband implies failure to obey God who has predetermined that wives be subordinate. Verse 19 is an instruction for husbands to love their wives which echoes Ephesians 5:25 but the verse goes further to instruct husbands not to be bitter against their wives. In this Colossian text submission of the wife to her husband should be paralleled by the husband's kind treatment of his wife. The text suggests what is normative in a Christian family- the wife submits to her husband who in turn treats her kindly, with gentleness. As in Ephesians 5:22-25, the text is not explicit on what course of action should be taken by either party in the event that the norm is not adhered to, that is, if the wife fails to submit and the husband treats her harshly.

3.2.5 The silent follower

3.2.5.1 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35

The context of this text is the assembly of Christians where women have to be silent, only seen and not heard. That women should not speak in church implies that women cannot be teachers of the Christian faith. The further implication is that women should not hold ministerial positions in the church. Because the text silences women, it is prohibiting women's participation in Christian theology, that is, women are barred

from interpreting and teaching the scriptures. The text suggests that if women fail to understand what has been taught during assembly and need further clarification they ought to ask their husbands at home. The implication is that such women ought to have Christian husbands who will clarify the Christian message to them in the event that they need further clarification. The question of who will teach unmarried women and widows is not addressed by the text. The text implies the intellectual superiority of men. The text considers it shameful for women to speak in church. This text parallels 1 Timothy 2:11-15 which also bars women from speaking in church. If the current text is interpreted in the light of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, it can be inferred that women are barred from teaching because they can be a source of heresy since a woman, Eve, was deceived and brought sin into the world. Maybe preventing women from preaching would be synonymous with preventing heresy in the church. While this might be a far-fetched extrapolation, it would not be surprising that some theological interpreters may take it that way and so advocate the exclusion of women from religious ministry.

According to Banana (1993:23), people seem to remember passages such as these where women are silenced. Texts that uplift women, for example, Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus learning, and great news of the resurrection being revealed to the faithful women, with Mary Magdalene being the first woman to see the risen Christ, are often ignored. Banana further contends that such texts are frequently quoted to “keep major church bodies from ordaining women into professional ministry”.

3.2.5.2 1 Timothy 2:11-15

Another passage that endorses the subordinate status of women both in the church and in the home can be found in 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Verse 11 echoes 1 Corinthians 14:34 that also instructs women to be silent in church and learn in quietness and submissiveness. Women are prevented from being theological teachers and preachers because, according to verse 12, to do so is to usurp the authority of men. The silence and subordination of women is justified in verse 13 which says that Adam was created first. The argument seems to be that since Adam was created first he is the primary being while Eve is secondary; having been made out of Adam and so the secondary (woman) cannot teach the primary (man) who is presumably the embodiment of full humanity. Verse 14 further justifies the subjection of women and their silencing in the church by explaining that because the woman was deceived and transgressed the law,

she should not teach. The verse appears to be saying that the woman cannot be a teacher of the faith because she is a source of heresy by virtue of her vulnerability to deception. Furthermore, the text seems to suggest that Adam was not deceived because he was intellectually strong and therefore not easily deceived, thus serving as a rightful teacher of the faith, unlike Eve, the woman, who was deceived. It is no wonder that texts such as this one can be used to bar women from taking on religious leadership and ministry. Verse 15 shows how childbearing, as an important role of a woman, is a source of her salvation, provided that it is coupled with faith, good works and holiness. The woman, according to this verse, can pin her hope of salvation on childbearing, implying that childless women cannot attain salvation. However, while women are thus provided with a window of salvation, they are not granted the opportunity to lead, according to the whole text.

3.3 EQUAL STATUS FOR WOMEN

3.3.1 Galatians 3:26-28

The strongest passages on the equality of women with men are found in Galatians 3:26-28. The text *'for in Christ you are all children of God through faith (Verse 27). As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ'* (New Revised Standard Version, 1995), suggests that through baptism Christians put on Christ (verse 27), that is, they enter the fellowship of Christians, sharing a common identity. Verse 28 *'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus'*, implies that the common identity acquired through baptism transcends social divisions of race, class and gender. That there is neither male nor female seems to suggest that Christians are equal within the context of the church, further implying that men and women can share in the ministry. Gender is no longer relevant, for Christians, in determining who does what in the church since male and female are one in Christ. While biological differences cannot be obliterated, the text appears to suggest that for Christians these are no longer important, they have become a social anachronism. The oneness of Christians is an allusion to gender equality in the church. No wonder that those of a feminist orientation (Banana 1993:23; Fiorenza 1995a:xii; Ruether 1985:115) appeal to this text as they advocate for gender equality. Interpreting the text in focus, Vorster (2008:97) says Paul "envisaged humanity undivided by ethnicity,

class and gender and emphasised a theology of the spirit.”Vorster is suggesting that Paul, in the text in question, placed primacy on the spirit rather than the body or material aspects, thus effectively showing that within the context of the spirit all are equal.

3.3.2 Acts 2:17-18

The context of this text is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost which Peter saw as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. Joel’s prophecy pertains to a time when the Holy Spirit would come and fill men and women, enabling them to prophesy. The text shows that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is not discriminatory. Both men and women, under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, can prophesy, that is, speak on behalf of God. Since both men and women can be prophets, they would equally serve as God’s messengers, with a word from God to the people. The implication is that both men and women, as fitting messengers of God, would have to speak out what God has communicated to them. The verse seems to contradict those texts, such as 1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:11-15, that command women not to speak in church but to learn in silence. Since women can be prophets they cannot keep quiet in church, otherwise they would be acting contrary to their calling. Those supporting the ministry of women are likely to quote a text such as this one (Acts 2:17-18) to substantiate their position. The fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel is associated with the ‘last days’ (verse 17), contrasted with the former days. It may be extrapolated that the text refers to the gender inclusiveness of the Christian ministry.

3.3.3 Luke 10:39-42

Jesus himself allows women to act on a larger scale when he encouraged Mary who chose to sit by his feet and learn instead of helping Martha to prepare a meal. When Martha complained that Mary was not assisting her, Jesus said Mary was doing the right thing. He applauded Mary for having chosen the good thing which was going to endure, that is, the word of Jesus. It appears Jesus took housekeeping as secondary to participation in theology, thus allowing both men and women to actively participate in Christian ministry.

3.4 INFLUENTIAL HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

This section is crucial because it gives an exposition of interpretations that have shaped both the doctrinal and ethical teachings of Christianity. The church fathers such as Augustine, Tertullian and Thomas Aquinas and other theologians such as Martin Luther promulgated theological teachings that were set to influence Christian belief and practice. It is in view of this that the role of women in both the Roman Catholic Church (the sphere of church fathers) and elsewhere can be understood. What early church fathers taught about the role of men and women in both religion and society was bound to influence the perceptions of men and women for ages. While today we talk of gender equality and the women's liberation movement, the legacy of church fathers and other biblical interpreters and theologians cannot be ignored in the discussion of the status and role of women in Christianity.

For many years, the Bible has been interpreted by male theologians who have tended to make women invisible or present them negatively (Phiri 1997:75). The major theologians of the church have thought that the fact that the man was created first implies the headship of the male (Jewett 1983:50). Vindicated by select quotations from the Bible, male authors insist on women's subordinate status, finding masculine power to be supported by the Bible (Newell 2005:311). During the early Christian era, early church fathers, acting according to the philosophy of their time, perpetuated Paul's admonition to the Corinthians with regard to women and thereby ignored the words and actions of Christ (Greyvenstein 1996:76). Paul's letters were, and still are, interpreted by many as stating that women are to be subordinate to men (Charles 1987:56, cited in Greyvenstein 1996:77). Such interpretations serve as the basis for excluding women from ordained ministry.

Augustine saw women as obstacles to Christian spirituality when he insisted that he could not see the glory of God because of women (Vorster 1984:69). Thus, religious thought and teachings have evidently affected the position of women, with women being identified more often with evil than with good in religious writings. Furthermore, Vorster reports Augustine as saying women themselves do not possess the image of God (*imago Dei*) like men. In his lectures on Genesis 2:23 and 3:16 Augustine, quoted by Ruether (1989:33) says, "The man rules the home and the state, wages wars, defends his possessions, tills the soil...The woman sits at home".

Under the influence of such texts as Genesis 3 and I Timothy 2:11-15, Tertullian wrote suggesting that women should not be entrusted with church leadership as they are easily tempted and referred to them as ‘the Devil’s Gateway’ (Vorster 1984:68). He wrote words which epitomise the philosophies concerning women during the Middle Ages. He wrote:

The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives on. ...You are one who opened the door to the devil, you are the one who plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree, you are the one who deserted the Divine Law. All too easily you destroyed the image of God, man. ...Because of your desertion...even the son of God had to die (in Greyvenstein 1996:77).

Themes on the subordination of women were taken up by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*, First Part, Question XC11:6 (Jewett 1983:61). He perceived women as sex objects who were to sexually gratify men but who were in no way equal partners. Aquinas agreed with Aristotle on the misogynist view that the female is a misbegotten male, a defective being. Under the influence of texts that depict woman as having been formed out of the man and woman serving as the image and glory of man, Thomas Aquinas, cited in Nasimiyu-Wasike (1991:76), said “Woman is an occasional and incomplete being...a misbegotten male. It is unchallengeable that woman is destined to live under man’s influence and has no authority from her Lord”.

Viewed as a misbegotten male in scholastic theology, the woman was portrayed as inferior in thought, will and physical activity (Ruether 1989:32). Aquinas argued that since woman was created from man and occasioned man’s fall, she is subject to the man and is by nature less strong and dignified than he (Jewett 1983:61). He further contended that woman is naturally subject to man because “in man the discretion of reason prevails” (Jewett 1983:61). Following Aristotle, Aquinas argued that women’s subjection belongs to the original order of nature as created by God. He saw women as subject to male power on account of sin and usefulness to men primarily for procreation (Nienhuis 2009:50). Aquinas, in the same text, maintained that for anything else men would be better served by other men.

Perpetuating the teaching of the pre-Reformation period on women, Martin Luther placed emphasis on the subordination of woman to the man in everything (Jewett 1983:66). He cited Genesis 3:16 in his affirmation of the subjection of women to male rule. According to Martin Luther, Eve was not inferior to Adam in the original

creation. She owes her inferiority to her sin and her subsequent punishment from God. Due to her succumbing to the Devil's influence, she was demoted to a far inferior creature than she was originally. Luther says "...The wife was made subject to the man...The rule remains with the husband and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command" (Jewett 1983:66).

Cited in Beavis (2007:36), Martin Luther says "All were priests and all (with the exemption of women, children, and incompetent persons) were called to the priestly ministry of preaching". Implicit here is the notion that ordained religious leadership is the domain of men.

Like Luther, Calvin held to the doctrine of female subordination, not only in marriage but in all things, especially in the oversight of the church (Jewett 1983:68). Commenting on 1 Timothy 2:12, he argued that the woman is prevented from holding the teaching office because it would not be compatible with her status as subject to the man. He further said, "For a woman to usurp the right to teach would be a sort of mingling heaven and earth. The woman was created later as a kind of appendage" (Jewett 1983: 68). The implication is that the woman was designed to be a supporter of male activities and therefore subordinate.

On the basis of texts such as Genesis 2:24, I Corinthians 11:3-12, Ephesians 5:22-28, De Lange (2006:84) argues that the family is 'a market-free space', marked by male authority wherein the husband is the head of woman, and responsible for representing the family in the outside world.

On the basis of texts that would be considered by feminists as antifeminist, traditionalists reject the legitimacy of women's ordained ministry (Scholz 2005:89). Jack Cottrell an evangelical Christian from the West, views the Bible as teaching the "male leadership view" or the "headship-submission pattern", a patriarchal ordering of society (Scholz 2005:92). Thus, male headship is taken for granted.

It can be concluded that the Christian tradition has encouraged the subordination of women through its theologies and interpretation of scripture. Gage (in Morgan 1999:46) argues that the history of Christianity was constructed upon an entire 'edifice of sexual inequality and comprehensive female disempowerment.'

3.5 CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS

3.5.1 The Church in Africa

Suda (1996:75) argues that while women constitute the majority of worshippers in the church in Africa, they mainly play a supportive role and rarely serve on church boards. The same point is reiterated by Phiri (1997:73) who asserts that with a few exceptions, African churches have resisted including women in leadership positions. Most churches in Africa cannot be said to have a gender responsive culture as men and the clergy in the church presume to speak for God, and to demand the obedience of women (Monyatsi 2008:246). Monyatsi further notes that in such churches, women are socialised to experience God as the one who orders their subordination, who requires them to serve and never be served. Taking a leaf from Monyatsi, who wrote from a Southern African context, the present researcher was inspired to investigate experiences of Christian women in one country of Southern Africa, Zimbabwe, her country of birth and residence.

3.5.1.1 Mainline churches

Traditional conservative religious groups may quote the Bible to support their position on the subordinate status of women and their roles as helpmate and mother (Takyi & Addai 2002:182). Many Christian churches see the inferior role of women as part of a divinely ordained natural order (Suda 1996:76). Men and male clergy in the church in Southern Africa presume to speak for God and to demand the obedience of women (Monyatsi 2008:245). Walker (1990:13) cited in Monyatsi (2008:246) argues that the missionaries espoused an ideology of female domesticity that laid stress on women's reproductive and nurturing roles above autonomy and productivity. The Catholic tradition, just as the conservative evangelical one, is characterised by male dominance (De Lange 2006:85). According to Nasimiyu-Wasike (1991:76) the Christian faith, brought to Africa by European missionaries, depict man as the image of God whereas woman was seen only as an image of man. In the mainstream churches in Africa, especially the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, women are not given real positions of leadership and decision-making (Rugyendo 2005:134). In the Catholic Church ordination is a sacrament, an outward sign of an inner spiritual grace (Vorster 1984:69). The masculinity of God confirms a male ministry in the church. The ordained minister, when celebrating the Eucharist does so in place of God. In 1976 the Roman Catholic Church outlined its opposition to the ordination of women, that they

cannot be priests (Rugyendo 2005:134). In the Roman Catholic Church, women are not equal to men in status and therefore laws that seek to redress gender imbalances are likely to be resisted. There is, therefore, a contradiction in the way that the church in Africa has preached about the equality of all humanity in Jesus Christ while in practice excluding women from Eucharistic ministry (Phiri 1997:75; Oduyoye 1995:4).

In some Christian churches women have assumed equality with their male counterparts. Ritchie (2001:10) expresses this when he argues that Christianity has had a significant role in opening up new roles for women, in giving them more freedom as individuals and considering them as equals to men. One indicator of advancing status of women in Africa is the increasing acceptance of the ordination of women to leading roles in the ministry of the various denominations. Indeed in some churches such as the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (UMCZ), the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ), the Baptist Convention there is neither male nor female in terms of religious leadership. In the RCZ women are part of the leadership at all levels (Hendriks & Rutoro 2008:40). After a heated debate lasting at least 20 years, the RCZ Synod decided in 2000 that women may become ministers (Rutoro 2007:213 cited in Hendriks & Rutoro 2008:40). In the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe women are ordained and in principle can occupy any leadership position within the church hierarchy. The Baptist Convention believes in the priesthood of all people, thus effectively opening up doors for the ordination of both men and women. To date there are some female ministers of religion in the above mentioned churches.

In spite of the acceptance of women's ordination in some churches, the numbers of women ordained so far is too low to warrant equal representation. However, this is a step towards the realisation of gender equality. It appears women themselves are not fully geared for the ministry as witnessed by low numbers of women who have taken up the challenge to date.

Catholic bishops in Zimbabwe now view marriage as a partnership between husband and wife and the traditional master/servant relationship as no longer tenable (Muyebe & Muyebe 2001:285). Muyebe and Muyebe further note that bishops advise that husbands and wives should work as friends and lovers, working out solutions to their

problems together. The bishops call for a revisit of traditional gender roles which would be based on the principle of gender equality.

3.5.1.2 African Initiated Churches

While African Initiated churches cannot be painted with the same brush, there is evidence that in a number of these women play key roles owing to the centrality of the Holy Spirit, which, when working through an individual, is not constrained by the sex of that individual. The individual serves as a medium in the manner of spirit mediums in African Traditional Religion.

In African charismatic churches and ministries, women might operate as faith healers or leaders of prayer meetings, and they play leading roles in evangelical crusades and in the general organisation of church activities (Marshall 1993 cited in Newell 2005: 313).

The acceptance of women's ordination in African Independent Churches, as in other churches, may be attributed to a growing acceptance, in the larger secular culture, of women's rights and freedoms (Ritchie 2001:10). Ritchie further notes that there are a number of African Initiated Churches (AICs) that have been founded by women and in this regard the leadership of the women concerned comes naturally.

Oduyoye (1995:2) contends that there are some African women who have leadership qualities. She says such women have followed their calls to ministry by founding new churches. Examples of women-founded churches include The Legio Maria of Kenya and Guta RaJehovha in Zimbabwe. Today there are many influential female prophets in AICs. Considering that AICs draw a lot from African Traditional Religion where women served as priests and played some important roles in both religion and society, such as being spirit mediums, diviners and healers, it is not surprising that the priesthood of women is accepted in some of these churches.

However, in some AICs, such as Johanne Marange, female ordination is unacceptable. If women are to have any leadership positions, then these have to be women-based, that is organisations whose members are females only. While in some cases women are allowed to preach, they are in principle barred from this activity when menstruating because menstruation is considered a period of defilement. As such, the participation of women in religion is severely curtailed.

3.5.2 The history and essence of the Christian feminist movement

Religious feminism emerged in the nineteenth century and was dominated by two major issues, namely the debate over equal access to the ministry and biblical criticism (Offen 1988:119, cited in Morgan 1999:43). The feminist movement is based on the affirmation of the full humanity of women (Ruether 1985:111). As an element of the feminist movement, feminist interpretation and concern with scripture has been generated by the fact that the Bible was used to halt the emancipation of women (Fiorenza 1995b:129). The grounding of contemporary biblical feminist scholarship may be traced to Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* (Fuchs 2008:46). *The Woman's Bible*, published in 1895 and 1898, sought not to reject the Bible outright, but to expose the androcentrism or male-centredness of existing scriptural interpretations (Morgan 1999:47). Contemporary women scholars of religion received fresh "ideological impetus" from the issues raised by the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s (Morgan 1999:47). Contemporary feminist consciousness has been greatly influenced by the development of the so-called "women's liberation movement" (Zikmund 1985:29).

One of the most influential feminist theories was offered by Rosemary Radford Ruether who argued that the religious denigration of women hinged on a series of theological dualisms (Ruether 1985:113). Feminism is no unitary or monolithic phenomenon, but incorporates a wide spectrum of political and ideological perspectives (Morgan 1999:43) all of which share the conviction that women are fully human and are to be valued as such (Farley 1985:44). Thus, as Russell (1985:146) contends, "In the midst of shared feminist community, some will stress one thing and some another". The recognition of the marginalization of women in the biblical field provided an impetus for cooperation among feminist and liberation scholars (Russell 1985:14). The feminist point of departure is a critique of patriarchy. The feminist interpretation looks at the Bible from the perspective of women struggling for human wholeness and liberation (Russell 1985:142). The thrust of feminist biblical interpretation is to challenge the scriptural authority of patriarchal texts and explore how the Bible is used as a weapon against women who struggle for liberation

(Fiorenza 1995b:129). Ruether (1985:116) argues that since the Bible was shaped by males in a patriarchal culture much of its revelatory experiences were interpreted by men from a patriarchal perspective. Furthermore she argues that the function of the Bible is the sanctification of the existing social order but this is in contradiction to an alternative perspective which seems to constitute the distinctive expression of biblical faith. She sees the biblical principle of prophetic faith as parallel to the critical dynamic of feminism.

While for some Christian feminists such as Letty Russell, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether the Bible continues to be a liberating word in spite of its patriarchal context and teachings, for others such as Mary Daly the Bible is a male book which should be cast aside by those committed to women's liberation. Elizabeth Cady Stanton observed that Genesis 1:26-28 dignifies women as an important factor in the creation, equal in power and glory with man while Genesis 2 makes her a mere afterthought (Mace 2009:12). The biblical notion of equality and partnership in Genesis 1:27-28 is distorted by male-dominated and culture-bound interpretation of biblical texts. In view of androcentric interpretations and the patriarchal nature of some biblical texts, radical feminists like Cady Stanton and Mary Daly see the only alternative for women being to move out of institutional religion which has been shaped by men to serve their interests.

Feminist interpretation of the Bible suggests that feminists have no consensus on the value of the Bible for women. The lack of consensus owes to the contradictory nature of biblical texts themselves when it comes to issues of gender relations. Tolbert, cited by Russell (1985:140), succinctly articulates the paradoxical nature of feminist biblical scholarship thus: "One must struggle against God as enemy assisted by God as helper, or one must defeat the Bible as patriarchal authority by using the Bible as liberator".

3.5.2.1 Christian feminist theologians in the West

Early feminist scholarship on women during the ministry of Jesus and the early church gave an account of Christian origins that emphasised the openness of Jesus and the early church to "non-traditional" roles for women as disciples, financial supporters, apostles, missionaries, teachers and leaders of house churches (Beavis 2007:30).

Daly (1985) and DiSalvo (1984), cited in Takyi and Addai (2002:182) have suggested that religious values, emanating from interpretation of religious texts, help to sustain the existing gender relations as they provide the normative framework for the behaviour of the members. They advocated a radical change that involved women's abandonment of patriarchal religion.

The symbolic representation of women in religious texts, myths, and stories affects women's power, subjectivity, and identity (Chakkalakal 2007:242; Davary 2009:47). Paul's letters were, and still are, interpreted by many as stating that women are to be subordinate to men (Charles 1987:56 cited in Greyvenstein 1996:77). According to Ruether (1989:31), Paul's metaphor that the head of a woman is her husband summed up the subjugated status of women. Chakkalakal (2007:249) argues that the misinterpretation of texts including 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; Colossians 3:18 and Ephesians 5:22-23, from the patristic era even to this day, has helped in the downgrading of women. She argues that Pauline texts have been interpreted out of context otherwise woman's equality with men in all that concerns human nature and dignity is implied in the biblical text (Chakkalakal 2007:247).

Jewett (1983:69) argues that no responsible theologian would say that the woman is a "kind of appendage" or lesser "helpmate". The point being made here is that in this day and age, it is absurd to hold on to the perception that women are merely facilitators of the activities of men. The various conventions on the rights of women and on gender equality such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) testify to the idea that discrimination against women on the basis of their sex is at variance with the spirit of the modern times. Constitutions of different states, including Zimbabwe, prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, among other variables.

Fiorenza (2005:90) insists that "a discipleship of equals" was a good model for religious units. She also argues that women should not be denied ordination because of their physiology. She says, "It remains intellectually and spiritually shocking in a post modern age to realise how a biologicistic reading of texts still keeps women from ordination" (Fiorenza 2005:87). Fiorenza is suggesting here that ordination should not be based on sex or physical features of a human being because firstly, it is a spiritual matter and secondly, it is not in keeping with modern trends that advocate gender

justice. Christianity has in it seeds of liberation, equality and dignity for all persons (Fiorenza 1995b:123). Fiorenza's work repeatedly stresses that the community formed by Jesus was a 'discipleship of equals' and that this egalitarian model- where roles were shared- was replaced by a hierarchical, patriarchal structure by the 2nd or 3rd century after Jesus (Sparrow 2006:21).

Equality, according to Fiorenza (1995b:134), "prevailed in the believing communities until Paul, who was the first to revert to patriarchal thinking and models and commence a process leading eventually to the loss of the vision and reality of equality in the early church." As such, Paul, seen in some sense as an egalitarian, is castigated by Fiorenza for reverting to oppression and marginalisation of women in the church. Fiorenza (1985:134) insists that "misogynist texts and patriarchal injunctions were generated because the discipleship of equals stood in tension with Greco-Roman patriarchal structures", otherwise patriarchal structures are not inherent to the Christian community. The so-called household code texts in the New Testament (including Ephesians 5:22-24 and Colossians 3:18-19) have sanctioned discourses of subordination, that demand submission and obedience from women (Fiorenza 1995b:142). The household codes reflect what Fiorenza calls the "ethos of kyriarchy" in that they are concerned with reinforcing hierarchical relationships in households, with the father, as head of the household, being the one to whom all others owe obedience and submission (Nienhuis 2009:56). 1 Timothy 2:11-15, according to Fiorenza (1995b:143), explicitly links the kyriarchal theology of submission with the teaching on women's sinfulness. She thus sees woman's sinfulness as justification for her subordinate status. Furthermore, Fiorenza (1995b: 143) sees 1 Timothy 2:11-15 alongside 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 as prescribing the silence of women and prohibiting women's authority over men by claiming that not Adam but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. The religious reinforcement of patriarchal submission has been amplified by theologians throughout the centuries (Fiorenza 1995b:130). Fiorenza (1999:61), cited in Chakkalakal (2007:253) has consistently upheld that women "must be acknowledged as human and ecclesial subjects with equal rights and dignity rather than remain objects of kyriarchal theology and clerical governance". This means that women should be treated with dignity in the church, realising that they are also human like men. Furthermore, this implies that women

should be given an opportunity to interpret theology and make decisions in the church rather than to be consumers of a theology carved out of a male perspective.

Ruether (1985:117) and Thistlethwaite (1985:101) suggest that the basic intention of the Bible is teaching justice and freedom for the powerless. For the two feminists cited above, the only correct reading of the Bible is one in which men and women can share without prejudice the ministry of service in the church. The feminists base the argument on Jesus' inclusion of women in his ministry and his ministering to their distress. In this regard they argue that the marginalization of women is unjustified. Similar sentiments are echoed by Chakkalakal (2007:254) who asserts that the criterion for ministry is not the biological factor of being male or female, or the social construction of gender; the deciding factor should be charisma of the individual for a particular ministry or service.

Commenting on Genesis 2:18-25, Pobee (1994:138) says for the woman to be "drawn from the side of the man" is only an image to indicate that the male man and the female man share in one nature, one species. Although the concept of helpmate (Genesis 2:18) has been commonly used to degrade women, the word helper (*ezer*) is often applied to God, and does not indicate subordination (Chakkalakal 2007:246). Chakkalakal further asserts that man and woman have a common mission (Genesis 1:28); to be partners with God in God's creative work and "stewards" of creation. She concludes that an unbiased exegesis of the creation accounts unfolds the inherent dignity and equality of man and woman.

Elizabeth Johnson, cited in Rakoczy (2008:140), asserts that the maleness of Jesus is not in question as it is part of his historical particularity but his gender has been articulated in ways that limit women's flourishing as disciples. The use of the Sophia (Wisdom) tradition by Elizabeth Johnson in reference to Jesus has the power to break the historical theological assumption that there is "an ontological connection between the being of God as male and male human beings (Rakoczy 2008:142). Elizabeth thus sees Jesus as transcending gender boundaries.

3.5.2.2 Christian feminist theologians in Africa

Feminist theologians in the West have undoubtedly influenced African feminists in the sense that African feminist consciousness borrows a lot from Western feminism, for example Mercy Amba Oduyoye's call for a hermeneutics of suspicion shows the

influence of Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was founded in Accra, Ghana in 1989, well after Western feminist theologians such as Cady Stanton, Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Letty Russell and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza had articulated their positions. It is not surprising to see common strands between the two branches of theology-in the West and in Africa. However, differences also need to be recognised as contextual. African feminist theologians articulate their theology within the framework of challenges African women face in the same way as feminist theologies in the West are adapted to that context.

In Africa, feminists read the Bible to empower African women (Mbuviyesango & Scholz 2009:94). African women theologians have collaborated, under the auspices of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter called the Circle), to operate and reclaim their identity as people created in the image and sound of God (Njoroge 2005:29). Njoroge contends that Church theology, leadership and understanding of God's mission in Africa have been largely articulated by foreigners and African men and the Circle has as its aim to end this long legacy. The starting point for African women theologians reading the Bible has been the Genesis creation stories re-read in the light of source and redaction criticism because the rejection of women in leadership position has been associated with ideas of their inferiority (Phiri 1997:76).

Male supremacy, according to Mercy Amba Oduyoye, is at variance with an egalitarian understanding of Christianity She says "African men sing 'viva' when people talk about racial and class exploitation, but they can hang you if you dare talk about oppression of women" (Oduyoye cited in Sweetman 1998:5). Thus, while men are quick to condemn those forms of exploitation and oppression that directly affect them, they seem to be oblivious of gender exploitation prevalent in society. Implicit in Oduyoye's assertion is that men are not comfortable with the issue of offsetting gender imbalances because they are satisfied with the status quo.

Oduyoye (1995:2), in view of unequal gender relations of power, accuses biblical interpretation and Christian theology in Africa of sacralising the marginalisation of women. Oduyoye warns that we must exercise caution when approaching the Bible, because not everything said in the Bible is good news for women (Pui-lan 1998:18).

Although the Christian heritage of biblical, “prophetic denunciation of oppression has served Africa well, oppressive strands of the same Bible reinforce the traditional socio-cultural oppression of women” (Oduyoye 1995:1). Oduyoye’s argument is similar to Banana’s (1993:23) assertion that parts of the Bible reflect a male orientation to life, to the hierarchical system of society, to the father-ness of God, all of which portray the ‘otherness’ and inferiority of women. As such, the rejection of women in leadership positions has been associated with ideas of their inferiority. Oduyoye says that partly as a result of negative depiction, African Christian women have remained at the margins rather than the centre of both the church and society. In the same vein, Monyatsi (2008:245) argues that women continue to face increased exclusion from participating in leadership and decision-making in the church despite their numerical majority. She goes on to say women are encouraged to take minor positions that reflect their traditional roles such as teaching in Sunday schools, visiting the sick and bereaved, raising funds, cleaning the church, cooking and serving food.

Oduyoye (1995:7) contends that the subordination of women in the church is contrary to the spirit of God which regards males and females as equal. She further argues that where leadership and initiative are seen as contrary to the female spirit (or are viewed as characteristics only of rebellious women) and are not encouraged or supported, we can suspect the spirit of God is being ignored. Oduyoye asserts that Genesis 1:26-28 suggests that women and men are equal and she expresses it thus: “Either women and men are of equal value before God, both created in the image of one God, or else we declare Genesis 1:26 a lie” (Oduyoye 1995:6). According to Claassens (2008:49), this Genesis text is a profound theological insight that has led feminist scholars to argue that the mystery of who God is includes the truth that both male and female may be used to image God.

In her exegesis of Proverbs 31, Oduyoye concludes that the text reinforces the subordinate position of women and perpetuates their stereotypical roles as mothers, wives, caretakers and self-sacrificial persons who put others’ needs first (Pui-lan, 1998:18). Oduyoye’s perception of the text is affirmed by Asumeng (1993:40) cited in Newell (2005:309) who admonishes wives, on the basis of the text in question, to forget about themselves and be preoccupied with the question: “Will this please my husband?” in everything they do.

The original relationship of equality between men and women first established by God at creation (Genesis 1:26-28) was restored in Jesus (Nasimiyu-Wasike 1991:20). Nasimiyu-Wasike depicts this relationship as one of equality. However, as Christianity gradually absorbed the cultural ethos of the Roman Empire, its structures began to reflect the patriarchy of the imperial household (Rakoczy 2008:140). Rakoczy further points out that the assertion that “there is neither male nor female” (Galatians 3:28) which described the earlier egalitarian community was replaced by traditional patriarchy.

From misogynist biblical texts it may be concluded that the Bible discriminates according to gender, greatly influencing the way women are treated in many societies (Monyatsi 2008:245). Monyatsi notes that the Bible clearly relegates women as second-class citizens as their silence and submissiveness are emphasized. This notion is also articulated by Banana (1993:23) who states that the Bible has been and continues to be used to “relegate women to a second class status in society, overlooking the liberating themes in the Gospels in favour of the neo-legalism of Paul.” Similar sentiments are echoed by Njoroge (2005:29) who asserts that the Bible has been misinterpreted and misused to deny women God-given identity and power, despite the biblical affirmation that human beings, female and male, are created in God’s image.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The chapter has showed that the status and role of women in Christianity is not monolithic but diverse due to the diversity in the interpretation and application of scriptures as well as in the content of the texts themselves. Male theologians such as Augustine, Tertullian and Thomas Aquinas have largely subscribed to the idea of the subordinate and inferior status of women while female theologians largely view women as men’s equals fit for both ecclesial and social leadership. Feminist interpretation of religious texts seems in part to be a product of the broad women’s liberation movement that began in the 20th century. Furthermore, it appears that African women theologians have been inspired by their sisters in the West. There is now growing acceptance of the religious leadership of women as evidenced by their ordination in some churches and the fact that some women-founded churches are attracting large followings. In spite of some tendency to shift towards an androgynous

culture in which both men and women can take on religious leadership, a patriarchal view of leadership and especially of priesthood still lingers in the church today. As such, feminist theologians have a reason to worry and hence their call for gender sensitivity in religious ministry- a call for a discipleship of equals.

To Wijzen and Tanner's (1995:119) question: Have the Christian churches contributed in any significant way to improving the status of women? The answer would be both in the affirmative and in the negative. Christianity confers both influential roles and marginal roles on women. It depicts women both positively and negatively. Hence as far as women's status and role is concerned, Christianity is ambivalent.

The status and role of women in religion determines in part perceptions on domestic violence against women. The ambivalence of Christianity with regards to the role of women seems to reflect the ambivalence towards the treatment of women, hence the relevance of the chapter to the domestic violence discourse.

The next chapter focuses on the status and role of women in Islam.

CHAPTER 4: STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The religion of Islam, like any other religion, has an impact on the culture of a society. Religion influences how people interact with one another, how they conduct their business as well as how they conduct their political activities. The relationship between men and women is one of the areas shaped by Islam. The question of the status of women in Islam has attracted much debate amongst both scholars of religion and Muslim practitioners themselves. Since Islam is a religion of vast dimensions, the experiences of Muslim women are diverse and for this reason it is difficult to provide a monolithic view of the status and role of Muslim women. Though Muslims perceive the Shariah, the Islamic Law, as emanating from Allah, they nevertheless, interpret it differently in different contexts, giving rise to diverse perceptions of the roles of men and women within Islam. As such the role of women in Islam is extremely varied. Quranic teaching, the Sunnah¹⁰, Hadith¹¹, culture and local customs as well as the various schools of Islamic law all influence the role of women. As Miles (2008:59) points out: "Shariah is not a single compendium of Islamic jurisprudence uniformly applied throughout the Muslim world." It is practised differently in various communities - so much so that the role of women varies from society to society although there are certain common Islamic features. In light of this, Baden (1992:3) argues that:

The different realities of Muslim women range from being strictly closeted, isolated and voiceless within four walls, subjected to floggings and condemned to death for presumed adultery, and forcibly given into marriage as a child, to situations where women have a far greater degree of freedom of movement and interaction, the right to work, to participate in public affairs and also exercise a far greater control over their own lives.

¹⁰*Sunnah* refers to the example of the prophet Muhammad in terms of what he did, said and approved of. The whole life of Muhammad can be referred to as *Sunnah*, as setting an example which all Muslims have to follow.

¹¹*Hadith* are the written traditions on the life of Muhammad. The *Hadith* are writings which record the spoken and acted example of Muhammad in his lifetime and are presumed to give much more detailed information on how to perform the duties and obligations of Islam (Baden 1992: 7). Thus the *Hadith* contain the *Sunnah* (example) of the prophet.

The same point is reiterated by Mohagheghi (2006:63) who points out that Islam, as it is practiced, is what human beings make of Islamic teaching, and that depends on regional cultures, traditions, political and economic realities.

This chapter seeks to review literature pertaining to the status and role of women in Islam owing to the fact that the status and role ascribed to people within various religious contexts have some bearing on how they are treated within those contexts. Literature under consideration will be based on the Quran and other authoritative texts for Muslims that come in the form of Hadith literature containing the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. However, Muslim feminists such as Asghar Ali Engineer¹² (1992:82) have questioned the authenticity of Hadith that denigrate women. Engineer (1992:79) contends that misogynist Hadith are of doubtful authenticity. He asserts that many Hadith “were forged and were uncritically accepted by theologians” (Engineer 1992:82). Further substantiating the misogynist nature of some Hadith, Engineer (1992:16-17) has this to say:

The traditions are often found to be highly prejudicial to women, treating them as far more inferior to men. Many traditions... are derogatory to women. ...We therefore cannot always accept arguments about the status of women based on such traditions and especially if they directly or indirectly conflict with the Quranic position.

In spite of the scepticism with which some Hadith are perceived, they remain an authoritative source of Islamic law. Speaking positively of Hadith, Hashmi (2010:591) writes: “The hadith of the Prophet amplified many of the Quranic provisions.” In this regard, the Hadith collections are perceived as a collection of texts that explain the contents of the Quran, being more detailed than the Quran.

4.2 WOMEN BEFORE THE RISE OF ISLAM

A look at writings by Muslim scholars reveals that they all agree that Islam advanced the status of women to a large extent. The recurrent assertion emerging in the writings is that Islam accorded women many rights they were denied during the period before

¹²Asghar Ali Engineer is a Muslim scholar and activist. He was born in Salumbar, Rajasthan, India. Known internationally for his work on liberation theology in Islam, he authored more than 40 books on Islam. Some of his famous works include: *Rights of women in Islam*; *Islam and its relevance to our age*; and *The origin and development of Islam*. As an advocate of peace and non-violence, he has been awarded several awards, among them the Right Livelihood Award in 2004.

the rise of Islam, the *jahiliyyah*¹³ period. King (2009:305) says that feminists acknowledge that Islam significantly raised the status of women which was lamentable in pre-Islamic societies. Esposito (1991:94) and al-Faruqi (1988:11) state that women were treated as mere chattels but Islam gave them independent legal status. Similar views are shared by Engineer (1992:14) who states that during pre-Islamic times, women were appendages of their male relatives as they were not independent legal entities. They were perpetual minors, firstly under the control of fathers or male guardians and subsequently under the control of their husbands (Esposito 1991:94). They were denied inheritance rights (Engineer 1992:31; Esposito 1991:94). There were some who allegedly buried their daughters alive and let them die in the grave because it was a disgrace for them to have female children (Hashmi 2010:591). In terms of marriage, men could marry any number of wives and could divorce their wives at will (Esposito 1994:94). Women had no legal recourse in that environment.

4.3 EQUAL STATUS FOR MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE QURAN AND IN EARLY ISLAM

Muslim jurists claim that the hallmark of the Islamic law, which governs the conduct of Muslims, is justice and equality (Mir-Hosseini 2006a:45, 2006b:629). In a similar vein, Esposito (1991:94) and Engineer (1992:14) assert that the Quran treats women fairly, giving them well-defined rights and an independent role to play. Such rights include the right to live, a right some females were denied as a result of female infanticide during the pre-Islamic era (Hashmi, 2010:591). Similarly, Hidayatullah (2009:163) states that the Quran and prophetic example (*sunnah*) advocate the equality of Muslim men and women. Applauding Islam's elevation of the status of women, Rehman (2007:114) says, "The Quran and the Sunnah provided a reformist and enlightened code of family values to a society engaged in substantial violation of women's and children's rights." This is with reference to the *jahiliyyah* period.

Women were not nonentities in early Islamic history as they attained important positions (Warren 2008:42; Ernst 2004:142). Ernst asserts that the wives of the Prophet Muhammad were his partners and supporters in the creation of the new

¹³*Jahiliyya* is an Arabic term which literally means ignorance. It is a term that is used to refer to the period before the rise of Islam, when Arabs allegedly lived in darkness, ignorant of Allah's will.

society and they continued to have eminence after his death. His first wife, Khadijah is believed to have encouraged the beginning of Islam by encouraging Muhammad to take up the task to which he was commissioned by Allah. Muhammad is reported to have sought the advice of his wives on crucial issues (Warren 2008:43). Soon after the death of Muhammad, women actively participated in all aspects of community life (King 2009:305).

4.4 DECLINE IN THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Al-Faruqi (1988: 11) views the period from 1250 to 1900 CE as the period of decline in the status of women. The decline in the status of women saw them losing the rights that Islam had bestowed on them and that Muhammad had sought to institute. These God-given rights were denied women due to a hierarchical logic wherein principles meant to improve the status of women were interpreted in a misogynist manner to favour men (Mejia 2007:14; Mir-Hosseini 2006a:43; Mir-Hosseini 2006b:643; Badran 2001:50; Engineer, 1992:1). That Islam originally held women in high esteem but this was changed after Muhammad is also expressed by Sechzer (2004:266) who says conditions for women began to deteriorate under the rule of Umar, who succeeded Muhammad. Engineer (1992:25) explains how women quickly lost the rights that Islam had bestowed on them. He blames it on the influence of medieval ethos which made it rather difficult for Muslims to maintain the Islamic ideals of human equality in general and gender equality in particular. He goes on to explain that interpretations on gender issues were influenced by contemporary attitudes in which women were viewed merely as instruments in procreation, sex objects and child bearers. Engineer's conviction seems to be that what is now referred to as Shariah is a blend of all sorts of influences, pre-Islamic and non-Islamic, on the perspectives of Muslim scholars and jurists, a sentiment also shared by Esposito (1994:94). In a similar vein, Mejia (2007:7) argues that female subjugation was not originally an Islamic feature but came as a result of foreign influences. In essence female subjugation is perceived as being at variance with the true spirit of Islam (Al-Hibri 2000:221; Mir-Hosseini 2006a:26). Leila Ahmed (cited in Raday 2003:674) reiterates that Islam's "conceptual ethical vision was stubbornly egalitarian with respect to the sexes and that it was on the pragmatic plane that patriarchy was instituted". The point being made here is that in principle, Islam is egalitarian but in practice this egalitarianism is seldom realised. The implementation of ideal principles is usually

difficult as there is often a tendency to accommodate local customs (Ter Haar 1990:84).

Al-Faruqi (1988:11) contends that it was during the period of decline that marriage, meant to be a contract between two people, was now determined and arranged by parents and guardians. She further argues that laws enabling women to secure divorce were undermined, with repudiation divorce (*talaq*) becoming almost the exclusive pattern of divorce. Furthermore, the level of female education, which had risen substantially during the early days of Islam, gradually declined (al-Faruqi 1988:11).

The period under consideration witnessed the variance between the central principles of the Quran, that advocate social justice, and traditional cultural practices that largely impede the implementation of that justice and fairness in Muslim societies, communities and families in diverse locations (McCloud 2008:101). It should, however, be noted that some Quranic verses and Hadiths are blameworthy for sanctifying gender inequality and advancing male dominance (Hashmi 2010:591). Hashmi shows how the reference to men as *qawwamun* (financial providers or guardians) over women, the inheritance ratio, and legal testimony foster gender inequality. He goes on to indicate that these discriminatory texts present a challenge to Muslim reformers or feminists. Given this scenario, one would be tempted to suggest that the decline in Muslim women's status cannot be explained solely in terms of influences external to Islam.

4.5 THE EMERGENCE OF ISLAMIC FEMINISM

The late twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a feminism identifiable as Islamic (Mir-Hosseini 2006b:638; Hajjah 2004:6; Mojab 2001:124). This feminism arose as a response to calls for gender equity within Islam (King 2009:305). Islamic feminism is a feminist movement and philosophy that is articulated within an Islamic framework; it is an Islamic discourse that suggests the compatibility of Islam with the feminist paradigm (Hidayatullah 2009:163; Ahmadi 2006:35; Mir-Hosseini 2006b:643; Moghadam 2006:1; Hajjah 2004:6; Tohidi 1998:283 cited in Moghadam 2002:1147; Mojab 2001:130, Fernea 2000:4; Moghissi 1999:65). According to Moghadam (2006:1), the term Islamic feminism was framed by expatriate Islamic feminists in the early 1990s to refer to a new discourse whose thrust was the reinterpretation of Islamic history to advocate women's rights. Al-Faruqi (1988:14)

refers to the emergence of Islamic feminism as a period of reform, of the reclamation of women's rights lost due to many socio-cultural influences upon Muslim legal scholars and jurists. The reform was a result of the influences from Europe and America, according to Ahmed (1992:154) and al-Faruqi (1988:14). However, this view is repelled by King (2009:304) and Moghissi (1999:130) who suggest that Islamic feminism was not a western product.

Most of the Islamic reformers appealed to their own religious sources to rediscover basic egalitarian principles. They sought a reinterpretation of the original sources of Islamic law (Moghadam 2006:1; Mojab 2001:135; al-Faruqi 1988:15). As Mir-Hosseini (2006a:42) states, Islamic feminism is “a gender discourse that is feminist in its aspiration and demands, yet Islamic in its language and sources of legitimacy.”

It should, however, be noted that women who try to affirm their rights by seeking social justice in Muslim contexts are often charged with appropriating a philosophy foreign to Islam (Ahmadi 2006:44). In a similar vein, Ernst (2004:149) argues that many Muslim women prefer to avoid the label ‘feminist’ since it is often associated with European colonialism and anti-Islamic attitudes.

In spite of its diverse forms (Moghissi 1999:93), Islamic feminism seeks to make a contribution towards the creation of a global society that is characterised by Quranic values such as democracy, social justice and gender equality (King 2009:305).

Islamic feminists, who fight for the rights of women in Islam, believe that Islam has resources useful for establishing a democratic society. Many feminists such as Ali Asghar Engineer, Fatima Mernissi, Azizah al-Hibri¹⁴ and Ziba Mir-Hosseini¹⁵ share the conviction that the Quran and Hadith can be interpreted in such a manner that they promote gender equality. They advocate for an egalitarian vision of Islam, challenging versions of Islam that advocate gender inequality (Barakat & Krohn 2005:2; Badran 2001:50).

¹⁴ Azizah al-Hibri is a professor at the University of Richmond, USA and a Fulbright scholar who has written on Islam and democracy and human rights. She is the founder and President of KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights. She publishes mostly in law journals. She has won a number of awards including the Virginia First Freedom Award in 2007. In 2011 President Barack Obama of the USA appointed her to serve as a commissioner on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

¹⁵ Ziba Mir-Hosseini is a Muslim feminist of Iranian origin. Among her publications is “Feminism and the Islamic Republic: Dialogues with the Ulema” (1999).

In recent years, feminists have played a significant role in the interpretation of Islamic texts (Mejia 2007:2; Moghadam 2006:1; Mojab 2001:135; Baden 1992:4). In this way, they challenge patriarchal interpretations of the Islamic law. Like their counterparts in Christianity, Muslim feminists advocate a reformist interpretation of Islamic texts rather than abandonment of these. They uphold women-friendly texts and interpret these in a way that is intended to enhance gender equality (Ahmadi 2006:38). Feminist Quranic scholars believe that the realisation of women's rights and dignity calls for a process of constant gender-sensitive Quranic interpretation (al-Hibri 2000:229; Kort 2005:370). For some Muslim scholars, such as Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Asghar Ali Engineer and Azizah al-Hibri, Islam is compatible with feminism. Muslim feminists view the Quran as supporting the full humanity of women. Mejia (2007:1) argues that the Quran is not intrinsically oppressive to women. She sees the problem of the oppression of women, not in the Quran as revealed to Muhammad, but in its interpretation which tends to favour men at the expense of women. The hallmark of the argument here is that the interpretation of the Quran needs re-examination so that its egalitarian aspects are unearthed. In light of this some feminists use the Quran in their struggle for gender equality. Mir-Hosseini (2006a:26) argues that the concept of justice is embedded in Islam's teaching and is the essence of Shariah. Muslim feminists view the teachings of Islam as supportive of women's rights and promoting gender equality (al-Faruqi 2008:7; Mir-Hosseini 2006a:26). In her article entitled: "*Towards gender equality: Muslim family laws*" Mir-Hosseini (2006a:23) argues for the search for gender justice within the framework of Islam when she asks: "Who is to say if the key that unlocks the cage might not be hidden inside the cage?" The rhetorical question implies the author's conviction that gender justice is not to be found outside Islam, but within. Mir-Hosseini (2006a:46) is hopeful that egalitarianism in Islam is under way when she asserts, "The new feminist voices in Islam herald the coming of an egalitarian legal paradigm that is still in the making."

Al-Faruqi (2008:7) argues, "As far as Muslim women are concerned, the source of any difficulty experienced today is not Islam and its traditions, but certain alien ideological intrusions on our societies, ignorance and distortion of the true Islam, or exploitation by individuals within the society." The point is echoed by Shorish-Shamley ([sa]:1) who argues that the position of women in Muslim societies has been

distorted by elements foreign to Islam. As such the blame is placed on Muslims who fail to observe the dictates of Islam and not on Islamic teachings as revealed to Muhammad.

Baden (1992:1) contends that whilst women are accorded rights under the Shariah, culture and tradition in the diverse societies in which Muslims find themselves impede the realisation of these rights. It is against this background that the following sections are going to discuss various aspects of the life of Muslim women, showing how the different aspects have been influenced by the interpretation of the Shariah in a given context. Both egalitarian and non-egalitarian tendencies in Islam shall be discussed in light of specific aspects as already mentioned. The aspects are: the idea of creation, spirituality, marriage and divorce, education and employment, inheritance, economic and property rights, personal status under Shariah, seclusion and veiling, politics and violence against women.

4.6 CARDINAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4.6.1 The idea of creation

Many Islamic scholars such as Khan (2006:81); Engineer (1992: 44), al-Hibri (2000: 227) and Doi ([sa]:1) point out that the idea of creation as presented in the Quran shows that men and women are equal in their being (personhood). The following Quranic texts testify to this:

O mankind! Fear your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; ... (Surah 4:1).

It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love)... (Surah 7:189).

(He is) the Creator of the heavens and the Earth. He has made for you pairs from among yourselves... (Surah 42:11)

O mankind. We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes... (Surah 49:13).

Underscoring the preceding, Doi ([sa]:1) argues that the idea of creation presents females as being on par with men, having been created from the same substance.

There is no question of one sex having been created from another in a sense which suggests that one has been derived from the other.

4.6.2 Spirituality

There are numerous passages in the Quran which underlie the spiritual and moral equality of men and women (Baden 1992:4; Badawi 1980:4). In a number of passages (Surah 4:124; 9:71-72; 16:98; 33:36; 48:7; 57:12-13) the Quran affirms the equality of men and women in spiritual matters. The Quran “established the moral equality of men and women as God’s creations” (Hashmi 2010:591). Expressing the religious equality of men and women, Badawi (1980:5) asserts: “In terms of religious obligations, such as the daily prayers, fasting, poor-due, and pilgrimage, woman is no different from man.” In Surah 4:124 the Quran explicitly addresses both men and women. The verse reads:

If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female, and have Faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them.

As such the passage does not discriminate on the basis of gender but treats women as equal to men in terms of the reward that they are going to get in the hereafter. In Surah 9:71, believing men and women who do good, who observe the pillars of faith namely prayer, *zakat* payment and obedience to Allah and his messenger are promised a joyful life after death in heaven. In the same verse observers of religious duties are depicted as friends of one another. The works of men and women are equally valued as far as the attainment of Paradise (a blissful future life) or Hell (an everlasting life of suffering) is concerned. The Quran makes it clear that men and women who believe in Allah will be forgiven and rewarded while unbelievers of both sexes will be punished. Thus on Judgement Day Allah will not treat males and females differently but will reward each according to his/her deeds. This is expressed by Surah 16:97 which reads:

Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, surely, to him will We give a new Life, a life that is good and pure and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.

Both men and women are obliged to obey Allah and Muhammad where it says:

It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Apostle to have any option about the decision; if any one disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path (Surah 33:36).

Unbelievers and polytheists, male and female, will be punished:

“And that he may punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Polytheists men and women, who think an evil thought of Allah. On them is a round of Evil, the Wrath of Allah is on them: He has cursed them and got Hell ready for them; and evil is it for a destination” (Surah 48:6).

In Surah 57:12 Allah is recorded as promising believers, both male and female, a blissful afterlife:

One day shall you see the believing men and the believing women-how their light runs forward before them and by their right hands; (their greeting will be): “Good news for you this day, Gardens beneath which flow rivers, to dwell therein forever. This is indeed the highest triumph.”

The Quran places equal blame on both Adam and Eve for disobeying God (Surah 2:36-37). The text says:

But Satan made them both slip from the Garden and so deprived them of their precious felicity. And We said: Fall down all (people), as enemies of each other. Earth shall be your dwelling and your livelihood for a time...

According to Badawi (1980:5; 1994:86), the Quran makes it clear that Eve was not the sole breaker of the divine law as both (Adam and Eve) jointly disobeyed, both repented and both were punished (Surah 2:36; 7:20-24). This scenario is different from the Biblical one (Chapter 3) in which the blame is placed on Eve alone. As such, the woman in the Quran is not depicted as the gateway of the devil (Patel 1997:39) and her status in the Quran, as argued by Muslim apologists like Badawi, has nothing to do with the sin committed in the Garden of Eden.

Some Hadith, however, raise controversy about the spiritual equality of women, for example, Bukhari, in his collection of Hadith (Volume 2:135) records that Muhammad said that “Prayer is corrupted by a dog, a donkey, and a woman (if they pass in front of the praying people)” (Stacey 2008:5). Umar, one of Muhammad’s successors, limited women to praying at home, thereby excluding them from the mosque. Women may not be allowed to serve as prayer leaders (*imams*). Al-Faruqi

(1988:12) confirms that in terms of religious participation women lag behind. Mernissi (1975) points out that there is no feminine equivalent for *imam* and, considering this, one may be tempted to conclude that the office of *imam* was never meant for women, signifying the exclusion of women.

Considering that women are not allowed to serve as *imams*, it can be concluded that the spiritual equality expressed in the Quran is not fully realised in practical terms.

4.6.3 Marriage and divorce

Muslims regard the family as the basic unit of society (Afshar 1998:128). Shorish-Shamley ([sa]:3) and Ansari (2000:214) claim that Islam recognizes the equality of men and women in marriage. Similarly, al-Faruqi (1988:16) argues “Islam brought women from the position of chattel in marriage to that of equal partners.” In this light, the husband and wife have equal legal obligations towards each other. This is in spite of the assertion that the husband is the head of the family (Ansari 2000:215).

With reference to Iran, Afshar (1998:167) notes that in spite of the state’s affirmation of justice and equality as Islamic ideals, the discourse on marriage and family is based on a patriarchal mode that is oppressive to women. Al-Faruqi (1988:11) endorses the patriarchal view of the family as the divine arrangement.

Both egalitarian and non-egalitarian beliefs and practices pertaining to marriage are discussed in the subsequent sections.

4.6.3.1 Choice of a spouse

While Badawi (1994:102) asserts that there are wide differences of opinion among Muslim scholars on the freedom of women to contract marriages independent of a *wali* or legal guardian, a number of Islamic scholars (Hashmi 2010:591; Patel 1997:35; Engineer 1992:99; Esposito 1991:95 & Badawi 1980:6) contend that according to Islamic Law, as enshrined in both the Quran and *sunnah*, women are entitled to contract their own marriages; they have the right to choose marriage partners. Thus the approval of a woman is sought before consummation of the marriage. Badawi (1980:6) expresses the most liberal view that a woman of sound mind may freely negotiate her own marriage contract. In support, Doi ([sa]:1) says that a Muslim woman has the freedom to choose her husband.

A marriage contract may have provision for spouses to state their specific rights and expectations in marriage but this is not implemented in some cases since some women are not at liberty to choose their spouses or even enter into contracts, something which is done by parents or guardians (Kimani 2008:10; Mejia 2007:14). Ansari (2000:223), a male Muslim scholar, supports arranged marriages and asserts that these have often worked well. Kimani (2008:11) points out that in Egypt and Libya some parents and guardians, especially the rural-based, contract marriages on behalf of their daughters while others allow their daughters (especially the educated) to make their own choices. In Hausaland, Northern Nigeria, marriages are arranged by parents or guardians (Weimann 2009:443; Callaway & Creevey 1994:35). In this regard, the right of a girl to choose her marriage partner is curtailed.

In some cases women do not realise their rights pertaining to marriage due to the Islamic decree that a Muslim girl may not marry a non-Muslim (Surah 5:6). This may be seen as a violation of a woman's right to choose a spouse (Commission of Human Rights 2002:2). Whilst Muslim women are confined to marriage within the Muslim community, Muslim men are allowed to marry Jews and Christians (People of the Book) in addition to Muslims (al-Faruqi [sa]:60). Al-Faruqi explains why this is so. She says it is rooted in history whereby Muslim men as traders, warriors, missionaries, religious pilgrims and administrators travelled to different parts of the world where it was sometimes difficult to find Muslim women to marry. On the other hand, women tended to remain in their predominantly Muslim societies hence it was not so difficult to secure Muslim husbands. In view of this explanation, one would still wonder whether the injunction on partner choice still stands given the increased mobility of women.

4.6.3.2 Husband/wife relationship

It is pertinent to start this section with a Quranic verse (*ayat*) which expresses the basis of a marriage union in Islam. The text is Surah 30:21 which says:

And among His Signs is this: That he created mates for you from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and Mercy between your (hearts), surely in that are Signs for those who reflect.

Marriage is depicted as a contract between people of the opposite sex who are joined by love and the desire to live in peace with each other. The marriage union is expected to achieve emotional well-being as well as serving as a legitimate ground for sex and procreation. (Abugideiri 2005:3; Badawi 1980:6). The passage depicts men and women as partners and as complementary (Badawi 1994:84; Labidi-Maiza 2006:73). Apart from the quoted verse, there are others which also suggest the complementary nature of husband and wife.

The Quran portrays men and women as protectors of one another (Surah 2:188). The surah indicates that the wife is her husband's garment in the same way as the husband is his wife's garment (Surah 2:188), showing mutual dependence and closeness between spouses. Thus the surah is an allusion to the equal worth of men and women. The husband cannot dispense with the wife in the same way as the wife cannot dispense with the husband. The cited passage calls for mutual concern between spouses and seems to rule out violence in the marital relationship. Where a husband and wife are protective of each other domestic violence would not have a place. The marriage relationship is a protective union as is also depicted in Surah 9:71. Surah 2:238 reiterates that men and women should do good to one another. Here again reciprocity is called for between men and women; a non-violent atmosphere in which men and women respect each other is implied. Mutual beneficence in marital relationships is being advocated (al-Faruqi 1988:40). Husbands and wives are expected to love each other and to be kind to each other (Patel 1997:42). On a similar note Doi ([sa]:2) cites a *Hadith* in which Muhammad said: "Among my followers the best of men are those who are best to their wives, and the best of women are those who are best to their husbands". Tenderness is portrayed as the hallmark of a healthy marital relationship. In this connection, Abugideiri (2005:3) and Patel (1997:42) argue that Islam prohibits any kind of injustice or oppression. This is substantiated by the claim that as a living example to Muslims, Muhammad was known to have treated women with kindness and respect and he strongly encouraged others to do the same (Abugideiri 2005:3).

Ansari (2000:216) asserts that Muslims are those who pursue all their dealings on the basis of mutual consultation only and not in the spirit of dictatorship. In a similar vein, Abugideiri (2005:3) says that all family decisions should be made after

consultation with the wife. For example, a decision such as weaning a baby must be made by mutual consent according to Surah 2:233 which goes:

The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. ... If they both decide on weaning, by mutual, and after due consultation there is no blame on them.

Husband and wife must agree on when to wean a baby and this shows mutual respect. In spite of Islamic teachings that purport to promote gender equality, Muslim men have always enjoyed more rights and privileges than their female counterparts in marriage and elsewhere (Mernissi 1975:102). This patriarchal dominance, according to al-Hibri (2000:229), was endorsed through the utilisation of traditional stereotypes of the woman as irrational and dependent, a violation of the 'Equality Principle'. Muslim personal status codes in almost all Muslim states including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria and Kuwait state that the duty of a wife is to obey her husband (al-Hibri 2000:222). Emphasis on obedience (*ta'ah*) signifies the dominance of the man. Al-Hibri (2000:224) further points out that the concept of *ta'ah* undermines the fundamental rights of women; it is a "patriarchal hierarchical construct that contradicts the fundamental Islamic concept of *tawhid* (the unity of God)". Alongside the expressions of oneness of origin between manhood and womanhood, there is assertion in the Quran of the superiority of men (Raday 2003:673). It would appear there is some contradiction here. Even Engineer (1992:42), who argues that the Quran equates males and females in a *normative* sense, concedes that "*contextually* speaking the Quran *does* grant a *slight edge* to men over women." Similarly, Raday (2003:673) claims that the view on the inferiority and instrumentality of women is given greater emphasis in the Hadith where Muhammad is recorded as having said to a woman that her husband was her Paradise and her Hell. This patriarchal ethos, emphasising male dominance as well as the submission of females to males limits women's opportunities in Muslim societies (Mernissi 1975:20; Callaway & Creevey 1994:31).

Although man and woman have claims on each other, the man is the leader in the marriage relationship (Badawi 1980:6). Surah 2:228 states, "And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them, and men are a degree above them." This verse may be construed to suggest discrimination against women by those of a

feminist orientation as it presents men as the leaders, being a 'degree above' women. In this connection, Shaikh (2007:68) points out that there are some Muslims who interpret Islam as a promoter of patriarchy on the basis of Quranic verses that foster gender hierarchy such as Surah 2:228.

According to Baden (1992:11) marriage is not a contract based on equality between the parties as the man enjoys more rights in the marriage. The man is entitled to his wife's obedience. In a similar vein, Mernissi (1996:113) argues that in Islamic society the husband occupies the position of a master while the wife serves as a servant, thereby distorting the mutual dependence of the two. Surah 4:34 shows that men are the guardians and maintainers of women. Women, according to the same passage, have the responsibility to obey their husbands.

Endorsing patriarchal dominance in marriage, Muslims in Angoche, a Mozambican Island, who were interviewed by Bonate (2006:154) indeed confirmed that in Islamic marriage, as practised in their area, the man's duty was to maintain his wife or wives and children while the wife's duty was to be obedient to her husband. Since women are expected to obey their husbands unconditionally, if they do not, their husbands have the right to beat them (Mejia, 2007:15). Surah 4:34 alludes to the treatment that should be given to a disobedient wife or a wife with a perceived propensity to be disobedient.

Three forms of disciplinary measures are suggested: admonition, refusing to share the bed with the wife and beating. Such measures are indicative of the notion that women are to serve the interests of their husbands to avoid trouble. Bonate's (2006:154) study confirmed the implementation of wife beating in the event that the wife disobeys her husband. Furthermore, the study also indicated that a disobedient wife could be divorced without any support during her *idda* (a three-month refrainment period after divorce within which the divorced women should not remarry). While a man who is being threatened by his wife's disobedience is admonished to discipline her, a wife who is being abused by her husband is encouraged to seek reconciliation with her husband (Surah 4:129). The wife is encouraged to make peace with an abusive partner whereas that partner is encouraged in Surah 4:34 to administer disciplinary measures against the wife to bring the wife into line. In light of Surahs 4:129 and 4:35 the Quran seems to discriminate against women and allows for their ill-treatment.

The Quran teaches against unilateral decisions on family matters and calls for consultation (Surah 2:233). However, many Muslim men disregard this Quranic directive by making decisions unilaterally (Memon. <<http://www.zawaj.com/articles/abuse.memon.html>>).

The picture that emerges from the review is that equality remains utopian in spite of some measures taken to establish it. The institution of polygamy, as an aspect of marriage, has bearing on marital relations, hence a subject worthy of consideration.

4.6.3.3 Polygamy

Polygamy of up to four concurrent wives is permissible under Shariah. The passage which is often cited to justify polygamy in Islam is Surah 4:3 which reads:

Marry of your choice, two or three or four, but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one...to prevent you from doing injustice.” The verse further states: “And if you fear that you cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only) or (the captives) that your hands possess. Thus it is more likely that you will not do justice....

Polygamy has often been cited as one of the institutions that show Islam is oppressive to women (Mejia 2007:14). Mejia argues that in a polygamous union the husband cannot be fair to more than one woman even if he tries hard. Expressing dismay at the institution of polygamy, Mernissi (1996:156) argues that the institution of polygamy shows acceptance of male promiscuity and in a way gives room to fornication (*zina*) which is a crime according to the Shariah. Mernissi (1975:16) argues that polygamy is “a way for a man to humiliate the woman as a sexual being because in bringing in another woman, he is proclaiming that his current wife is unable to satisfy him.” Mernissi thus perceives polygamy as diminutive to women since contracting a subsequent marriage suggests that the first wife is inadequate.

Muslim writers such as Engineer (1992:104) and Patel (1997:49) suggest that polygamy in Islam is not encouraged though it is permissible under special circumstances. Rehman (2007:115) contends that the Quran does not encourage polygamy on the basis of the condition laid down in this regard. Surah 4:129 which states, “You are never able to be fair and just as between women (wives), even if it is your ardent desire...” is taken to suggest that polygamy is discouraged since it is not possible to be fair in one’s treatment of more than one wife. Rehman (2007:115)

further points out that Quranic verses (Surah 4:3 and 4:129) permitting polygamy were revealed for a pragmatic purpose- to cater for many widows and orphaned children who had been left behind by men who had lost their lives in the bloody battle of Uhud (625 C.E.). His contention is that many of the historic reasons for justifying polygamy in Islam are no longer tenable. Today, in most Muslim societies, polygamy is the exception rather than the norm because the condition of justice laid down in the Quran is a deterrent to those who fear they cannot treat more than one wife fairly (Patel 1997:49).

In Northern Nigeria there is intersection of polygamy and child marriage whereby young girls are in most cases married to older men who already have at least one wife (Callaway & Creevey 1994:35). This appears to be a double tragedy for girls.

It has been noted that polygamy is spurned by feminists who see in it the exploitation of women for the gratification of men. Although grounded in a historical reality (the Uhud battle of 625 CE), polygamy is not encouraged in view of the condition of justice (Surah 4:129) attached to it. It would appear even the Quran acknowledged that polygamy is difficult because of the difficulty in implementing fairness.

The next marital aspect under consideration is divorce.

4.6.3.4 Divorce

Divorce, according to Stacey (2008:6), is considered the most “detestable of permitted things” in the Quran. Although it is of prime spiritual importance, a Muslim marriage may be dissolved if it is no longer workable; if it fails in its principal purpose of spiritual growth (Badawi, 1994:102; Patel, 1997:53). According to Surah 2:229 both men and women have the right to divorce. The verse states:

It is not lawful for you, (men), to take back any of your gifts (from your wives), except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah. If you do indeed fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah, there is no blame on either of them if she give something for her freedom.

Al-Faruqi (1988:16) argues that in filing for divorce, a woman changes from being an onlooker to an agent, someone who initiates. Some Muslim countries, such as Morocco and Tunisia, have improved the lot of women by granting them the right to

seek divorce if their marriages are no longer workable. The unilateral declaration of divorce (*talaq*) by the husband is discouraged in most countries (al-Faruqi 1988:15).

While divorce is the right of both husband and wife, the man has more rights in divorce (Surah 2:228). Both men and women have a right to seek divorce (Surah 2:229) and may agree on dissolution of marriage. The woman can seek divorce through an Islamic court (*khul*). However, it appears agency in the divorce process is largely the prerogative of men as suggested by Surah 2:230-233. It can be extrapolated, on the basis of Surahs 2:23 and 2:230-233 that the ability of a woman to effect divorce is determined by the consent of the husband who is the super ordinate and who seems to have the prerogative to initiate divorce. Thus the man remains dominant in the case of divorce (Esposito 1991:97). According to Stacey (2008:6) only the man is free to send his wife away without having to discuss the matter with the wife. *Talaq* (repudiation), whereby divorce is effected by pronouncing the statement, “I divorce you” three times, gives the husband an edge over the wife in terms of divorce (Kimani 2008:11; Mejia 2007:17; Baden 1992:11). It should be noted that while *talaq* is controlled or prohibited in some Muslim countries, it is still practiced in regions such as Nigeria (Hausaland) (Callaway & Creevey 1994:39).

While women are allowed by law to divorce their husbands in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, socially divorce remains very difficult (Kimani 2008:10). Although some Muslim scholars contend that Islam allows women to file for divorce when need arises, divorce may be hampered by socio-cultural factors such as stigmatisation and the cumbersome nature of divorce proceedings for women (King 2009:316). Where a man divorces his wife by repudiation the role of the judge, in the case of Morocco for example, is not to subject the husband’s decision to scrutiny but simply to register it (Noon 2008:5).

Expressing that polygamy and repudiation are twin evils that treat women as sex objects; Mernissi (1975:17) says:

While polygamy deals with the intensity of the male’s sexual drive, repudiation deals with its insatiability. Repudiation prevents the man from losing his sexual appetite through boredom.

The objectification of women through polygamy is also underscored by Hidayatullah (2009:165) who states that in the Islamic legal tradition women have been presented both as inferior to men as well as objects for use by men.

Noon (2008:5) points out that a woman is not equal to a man in terms of ending a marriage because while the man's decision is endorsed through registration by the judge, her decision is subjected to the judge's scrutiny before approval. In Sudan, men have a right to a unilateral divorce without any court appearance while a woman must prove in a legal proceeding that their husband has abandoned them or show other cause for divorce (Sheldon 2005:62). When a marriage ends in divorce, the man gets legal custody of children (Baden 1992:11).

Bonate's (2006) study in Northern Mozambique also affirms the skewed nature of divorce laws in Islam. The study established that a *talaq* through repudiation was the most widespread among Northern Mozambican Muslims. Furthermore, it emerged that after the *talaq* the husband can marry immediately if he wishes but a wife can only do so after a waiting period of three months (*idda*). In addition, adultery (*zina*) for a wife was often followed by repudiation whereas for a man it was not punishable (Bonate 2006:154). One can therefore conclude that the laws on divorce are in favour of the husband.

4.6.4 Education and employment

Islamic law supports the education of both males and females (Wadud 2006:143; Ansari, 2000:223; Badawi 1980:5; Shorish-Shamley [sa]:2). The authors indicate that in early Islamic history there were some educated women who contributed significantly to the development of Islam. For example, Ayisha, one of the Prophet Muhammad's wives was an Islamic scholar and one of the most important sources of Hadith. Barazangi (2004:1) reiterates that the two primary sources of Shariah, the Quran and Hadith are rich in precepts that show that Islam has always advocated access to education by all Muslims. Pursuing knowledge is depicted as the responsibility of both males and females.

In the history of Islam, Muslim women have served as scholars and leaders in education. For example, Fatima Al-Fihri established the first degree-granting university in the world in Morocco (American Muslim Woman's Association (nd:2).

This illustrates women's right to education in Islam. While there is a high level of illiteracy among women and girls in Afghanistan, in some Muslim states such as Egypt and the United Arab Emirates women are highly literate and constitute a substantial percentage of students in some institutions of learning.

Islam grants both males and females the right to seek employment (Ali 2010:618; Engineer 1992:93). As such the woman can also earn and affirm her right to economic independence (Ansari 2000:222). Surah 4:32 states: "...to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn." This implies that one who is employed, male or female, is entitled to benefit from the earnings from the employment. However, it should be noted that Islam regards a woman's role as a homemaker, taking care of the home and children, as the most important role a woman can play in society (Esposito 1991:96). Islamic history shows that both men and women participated in economic activities (Shorish-Shamley [sa]:5). For example, Khadijah, Muhammad's first wife, was one of the most prominent business people of Muhammad's time.

Today women in a number of Muslim communities go to work outside the home (Smith 1994:307; Ahmed 1992:208). In Northern Nigeria, for example, academics, businessmen and executives encourage their wives and daughters to take up employment outside the home (Weimann 2009:436).

Whilst some Muslim women have access to education and employment, others have restricted access (Fernea 2000:6). A study conducted by Sultana, Jawan and Hashim (2009:268) among rural women in Dinajpur district, Bangladesh, revealed that women's education and employment opportunities were restricted by the custom of *pardah*. Restriction of women's movement results in women's limited participation in both educational and occupational activities because going to school and jobs both require women to be able to move without restriction (Sultana et al 2009:268; Mernissi 1975:85; Smith 1994:317). For example, in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia women are denied the right to work outside the home. Emphasis on women's role as wife and mother and homemaker has undermined women's right to education in some Islamic communities (Wadud 2006:143; Fernea 2000:6; Ahmed 1992:159).

Ansari (2000:223) seems to support the confinement of women in homes as he supports the separation of the sexes on the ground that this is a deterrent to sexual

promiscuity. However, such confinement has the effect of impeding women's full participation in the public sphere. It would appear seclusion of women in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan has opened some opportunities for women. This sounds contradictory. Learning is segregated in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan as male and female learners attend separate institutions (Smith 1994:309). On the other hand, this segregation has impacted on *purdah* as educational segregation has necessitated the employment of female teachers to teach female learners. Moreover, increased educational opportunities have also opened career opportunities for women in the outdoor world (Smith 1994:311). Smith suggests that on the whole, Muslims, both liberal and conservative, seem to agree that women should be given an opportunity both to get educated and to work.

What can be noted from the foregoing discussion is that while Muslim women are accorded educational and employment rights in Shariah, obstacles to education in many societies impede the realisation of these rights. Thus, the rights are both granted and compromised.

The next section deals with some aspects related to education and employment but are treated separately because they are not synonymous with these (education and employment).

4.6.5 Inheritance, economic and property rights

During the *jahiliyyah* period women had no right to inheritance but Islam granted them this privilege (Hashmi 2010:591; Engineer 1992:31). A woman can inherit in her position as mother, as wife, as sister and as daughter (Doi [sa]:1; Mark 2003:5). This is suggested in Surah 4:7 which says:

From what is left by parents and those nearest related there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large-a determinate share.

The Islamic law of inheritance has given rise to controversy both inside and outside the Muslim community. The dispute is centred on the share that is to be inherited. The Quranic injunction that a male relative receives a share equal to that of two females (Surah 4:11) has engendered a heated equality debate. It has often been argued that the inheritance ratio is gender sensitive as it takes into consideration the fact that the man has more economic responsibilities than the women, being responsible for the

economic well-being of children and the women in the extended family (al-Faruqi 2008:4; Esposito 1991:96; Badawi 1980:8). Furthermore, since a woman receives *mahr* (a marriage gift) and is not obliged to maintain the family, the inheritance ratio is justified (al-Faruqi 2008:4; Engineer 1992:71; Badawi 1980:8). The argument here is that the inheritance ratio in Islam should be seen within its social and economic context. Thus the variation in inheritance rights is viewed positively by Muslim apologists as being considerate of the variations in financial responsibilities of Muslim men and women. This point is articulated by Badawi (1980:8) thus: “An examination of the inheritance law within the overall framework of the Islamic Law reveals not only justice but also an abundance of compassion for women.”

According to Baden (1992:12), the inheritance ratio in Islam places females in an inferior economic position relative to males and shows that women are not equal to men; there is gender disparity in this regard. In a similar vein, Smith (cited in Sechzer 2004:265) argues that the Quran teaches a double standard with regard to gender in that the laws of inheritance show that a woman can only receive half of what her brother receives. It has also been noted that in some Muslim communities women do not inherit at all, contrary to Quranic teachings (Baden 1992:12).

Badawi (1980:8) argues that according to Islamic Law a woman is entitled to own property in her own right whether she is single or married. All schools of thought agree that a wife’s income and property is under her control and that it may not legally be acquired by her husband (Patel 1997:61; Badawi 1994:102; Engineer 1992:53; Doi [sa]:2). Most contemporary laws in Islam reaffirm women’s right to own property (al-Faruqi 1988:15).

Although in principle Muslim women have the right to seek employment outside the home, this right is sometimes not realised because of emphasis on the domestic responsibility of women (Baden 1992:13; Ernst 2004:143) and social practices such as *purdah* (female seclusion) (Sultana et al 2009:275). *Purdah* effectively confines Muslim women to the home, rendering it impossible for them to get employed outside the home (Sultana et al 2009:277). Sultana et al further suggest that women’s confinement due to *purdah* engenders their economic dependence and their vulnerability to exploitation by men.

One can conclude that in some cases women do not enjoy the rights to which they are entitled.

4.6.6 Personal status under Shariah law

Hashmi (2010:591) and Doi ([sa]:2) state that in Islam a woman has an independent legal standing and can enter into a contract in her own right. Similarly, Rehman (2007:113) states, “one of the major legal innovations introduced by the Quran and Sunnah was to award a legal personality to women”. Under the Shariah women have the right to enter into contracts including the right to contract marriage (Esposito 1991:91; Rehman 2007:113).

A Muslim woman can retain her maiden name after marriage. Patel (1997:37) contrasts this with the Western scenario where a married woman who retains her maiden name is often viewed as a feminist or as unusually self-assertive. Maintaining one’s name could be considered an indication of independent personhood and gender equality considering that according to Hamilton, Geist and Powell (2011:149) marital name change originated in notions of the patriarchal family system, in which women were considered property of their husbands. However, although the woman can retain her maiden name on marriage, the child born in the marriage takes the name of the father (Afshar 1998:158).

In the context of economic transactions, the Quran (Surah 2:282) mentions the equivalence of two female witnesses to one male witness. Engineer (1992:66) argues that the context of the verse does not suggest that women are inferior in intelligence but that at that time women had no or limited education in business terms and so they had to be two to remind each other in the event that one has forgotten. Furthermore, Engineer contends that the verse is contextual and not normative and need not be applied to contracts of other types.

In spite of their equal legal standing before the Shariah, women in many Islamic countries have been treated as perpetual minors, firstly under the guardianship of fathers or elder brothers and subsequently under the guardianship of their husbands following marriage. Although Muslim countries such as Egypt and Bangladesh have constitutions which uphold the principle of gender equality (Baden 1992:13), the

realisation of this principle has often left a lot to be desired. For the most part, legal reforms have accrued to elite women, but the experience of rural women and lower class urban women has been less favourable (Baden 1992:21).

In recent years women in some Muslim countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, have secured more legal rights in different spheres of life including politics (Kimani 2008:9). Kimani points out that this development was due to women's rights activism in North Africa during the 1980s and 1990s. It should, however, be noted that the full implementation of gender equality in all aspects of life in the countries under consideration is yet to be realised due to social factors (Kimani 2008:9). For example, while Egypt's constitution grants equality to all citizens, Islamic family law places women under the guardianship of men as fathers, brothers or husbands (Kimani 2008:10).

4.6.7 Seclusion (*purdah*) and veiling (*hijab*)

Seclusion and veiling of women are ancient customs that predate Islam (Davary 2009:49). The veiling of women, the *hijab*, has been the subject of much discourse. Female seclusion and veiling are practised in diverse ways in Muslim countries. There are also variations in what constitutes the veil. *Purdah* (seclusion) is associated with a strict division of spaces between the sexes (Engels 1989:426). Engineer (1992:82) maintains that women were never confined to their homes as can be gleaned from the accounts of female companions of Muhammad. Even today, some Muslim women freely interact with men. According to Muslimah Media Watch (2010:1), Muslims in Southern Africa have always had women as part of their congregations. The Media Watch goes on to show that South African Muslim women have increased visibility in public.

Some restrictions are put on women (such as those prescribed in Surah 24:31) to save them from becoming mere objects of lust (Engineer 1992:86). Engineer (1992:86) further emphasises that the Quran requires decent dressing and not necessarily *hijab*. According to Mark (2003:5), "covering the head and body in public (*hijab*) is viewed by many Muslim women as a protection of their modesty, a way to discourage men's covetous eyes". In a related context, Engineer (1992:90) asserts that the Quran

requires the chastity of both men and women since men are also advised to lower their gaze, and not stare at women.

In the Bangladesh study among rural women by Sultana et al (2009:272), it was revealed that an overwhelming majority of the respondents showed a preference for the veil. Sultana et al (2009:275) noted that veiling protects a woman's "modesty while also protecting her husband's family's *izzat* (respectability)" On the same note Davary (2009:58) argues that some Muslim women put on the veil to limit their objectification. As such they do not see the veil as an object of oppression. In this connection, Davary (2009:59) writes "verses that speak of the veil do not explicitly indicate a subordinate position for women, even if veiling, in practice, can at times position them as such."

Tunisia, a Muslim state, presents an interesting scenario in relation to the aspect of veiling. The government has banned veiling (*hijab*) from public institutions such as schools (Hawkins 2011:35). Hawkins (2011:54) further points out that in Tunisia, as in France, the *hijab* is assumed to be inherently regressive for women, preventing them from becoming full participants in modern civil society. The ban on the veil seems to suggest an emphasis on freedom from religious entanglements as a mark of modernity.

Davary (2009:49) argues that in spite of insistence by a number of scholars that veiling is not tantamount to subjugation, it is widely held, especially in the West, that the veil denigrates women. Discarding the veil, to some extent, is viewed as a sign of liberation and this is implied by Mernissi's (1975:101) statement that the "first signal of liberated Arab women was to throw away the veil and putting on Western dress." Nawal al-Saadawi, a former Egyptian minister of health and an outspoken advocate for women's rights, felt that those who adopt the *hijab* are "the brainwashed victims of a masochist slave psychology" (al-Saadawi cited in Smith 1994:306). This implies that she saw the veil as a symbol of oppression which is not perceived as such by the oppressed, who view it in a positive light.

Mernissi (1975:20) argues that the fear of *fitna* (chaos) that characterised traditional Muslim societies is the basis of female seclusion and veiling. In this regard, female sexuality was conceived of as dangerous to men and as such seclusion and veiling were instituted as measures to guard this. This point is reiterated by Baden (1992:16)

who states that the practices of seclusion and veiling are “strongly associated with Islamic views about the “potentially destructive power of (particularly women’s) sexuality”. They are safeguards against female sexuality. Seen from this perspective, “veils and walls were particularly effective anti-seduction devices” (Mernissi 1975:101). Mernissi’s argument is that since female sexuality was seen as a threat to the integrity of men, it was found necessary to confine women to homes and make them cover their bodies so that they do not tempt men.

For Muslim women who are “unwilling to observe, who are unconvinced of its religious necessity, the veil is nothing but a restriction on their rights and a sign of bondage” (Davary 2009:48). Thus, whereas on the one hand the veil is seen positively as protective of the dignity of women, on the other hand it is seen as a threat to women’s freedom. In this connection, Davary states that the criticism of the veil in the Western world is largely due to its being perceived as a symbol of oppression of women.

In the Quran seclusion and veiling were suggested for Muhammad’s wives with the view of protecting their chastity (Engineer 1992:5, 83). The basis of *hijab* is Surah 33:32-33 which reads:

O Consorts of the Prophet, you are not like any of the (other) women. If you do fear (Allah), be not too complaisant of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire; but speak a speech (that is) just. And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of former times of Ignorance; and establish regular Prayer, and give regular Charity; and obey Allah and His Apostle. And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, the members of his family, and to make you pure and spotless.

From the cited passage it can be inferred that originally veiling was meant for Muhammad’s wives. Baden (1992:17) argues that the spread of veiling from the household of Muhammad to other people was influenced by the example of conquered peoples. The notion that the veil started off as an elite dressing is also alluded to by Callaway and Creevey (1994:31) when they assert that in Northern Nigeria the veil was originally worn by the wives of religious leaders and wealthy individuals before it became the norm in both rural and urban areas.

The practice of seclusion, coupled with the custom of veiling, contributed to the

diminishing of the status and role of Muslim women (Sechzer 2004:270). Sechzer goes on to say that the customs of seclusion and veiling emphasised the obedience of women and worked to assure their chastity, making it clear that their main role was procreation. Reiterating the restrictive nature of seclusion, Sheldon (2005:62) asserts that it restricts women from appearing in public without a male escort, a severe limitation that keeps women from participating in community business and activities. The restriction on women's movement is notable in Saudi Arabia where a woman is not allowed to travel without the company of a male relative or to drive (Engineer 1992:5; Smith 1994:307). Engineer points out that this kind of restriction is not Quranic and that a woman does not need to observe *purdah* in order to protect her chastity.

Mohagheghi (2006:66) says it should be noted that separate spaces and activities are experienced differently by most Muslims. She also says that for many Muslim women spaces of their own represent safe places. The places are not seen as a disadvantage or an obstacle to living an active life. As such the existing traditions which from the outside may be perceived as disadvantageous and discriminatory, seen from the inside, have a variety of advantages which some women do not regard as degradation. In light of this, the importance of taking into consideration these different perspectives cannot be overemphasised.

The forthcoming section discusses the status of Muslim women in politics.

4.6.8 Politics

Badawi (1980:9) argues that any fair investigation into the history of Islam shows that Muslim women played active roles in politics. Mohagheghi (2006:65) contends that during the early Islamic period there were women who passed on Islamic teaching as legal scholars. Their role models were the wives of the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatima and his granddaughter Zainab (Mohagheghi 2006:65) Women's political participation in early Islamic history is testified by their interaction with caliphs where in they were often consulted (Engineer 1992:80).

Fatima Mernissi (1993) in her book "*The forgotten queens of Islam,*" shows how women, in early Islam, also actively participated in politics. She cites examples such

as Sultan Radiyya, who assumed the throne in Delhi in 1246, Shajarat al-Durr, who gained power in 1250 and a number of Arab queens in Yemen to whom the title *malika* was applied. Mernissi (1993:115) singles out Yemen as exceptional in the Arab world because many women ruled there. Engineer (1992:81) also suggests the Quranic approval of the political leadership of women when he says that the Queen of Sheba is portrayed positively in the Quran.

In many Muslim states today such as Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, and Iraq women have been granted the right to vote (Stacey 2008:23). In West African countries Muslim women are permitted to vote but usually males are the election candidates (Callaway & Creevey 1994:141). That Benazir Bhutto was Prime Minister of Pakistan at one point indicates provision for women's participation in politics. South Africa's Fatima Meer is recognised as a prominent political activist in South African history (Jeenah 2004:2).

While there are some politically active females in the history of Islam such as Aisha and Umm Salama, Muhammad's wives, for the most part politics in Islam is a male domain (Kimani 2008:12). According to Mernissi (1993:4), just as there is no feminine Arabic form for the two words *imam* and *caliph* which are embodiments of power, there is exclusion of women from power. Badawi (1980:9) is at pains to try and show the equality of males and females in politics in light of a Hadith which says "A people will not prosper if they let a woman be their leader" (Sahih al-Bukhari Volume 2 p.1053). This tradition has often been invoked by Muslim scholars and jurists to prevent women from taking on political leadership in Muslim countries (Engineer 1992:17). Engineer (1992:79) suggests that such a Hadith be disregarded because for him "it is not acceptable to reason... has elements of forgery." It is worth noting that regarding a hadith as having been forged is a serious matter for most Muslims who believe hadith collections are authoritative. Shayk Aminuddin Mohamad (2002), cited in Bonate (2006:148) affirms that a Muslim woman cannot be a head of state but he points out that the opinions of Islamic jurists is divergent with respect to her position as a judge.

Many conservative Muslims believe that women cannot assume political leadership positions. When Benazir Bhutto was elected prime Minister of Pakistan, conservative religious leaders in Egypt felt that this was against Islamic principles and

communicated this to the president of Pakistan (Smith 1994:307). The current Arab Spring is witnessing the active participation of women as protestors (Ouali 2011:1) but these women are not influential in decision making in these movements. The violence and discrimination that Muslim women experience may have inspired them to join protests under the banner of the Arab Spring but it is unclear whether they will benefit from these protests.

The next section considers violence against women in relation to Islamic teachings and practices.

4.6.9 Violence against women

Religious texts can be misused to justify violence. One verse in the Quran (Surah 4:34) which mentions hitting one's wife, has been the subject of much attack from non-Muslims and controversy among Muslims (Abugideiri 2005:3). The verse, dubbed the "Complex Verse" by al-Hibri (2000:227), goes:

Men (husbands) are the protectors and maintainers of women (wives), because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, and (last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience seek not against them means (of annoyance); for Allah is the Most High, Great (above you all).

The verse is used by some abusers to justify beating their wives (Afshar 1998:143; Kort 2005:365). The husband's obligation to protect the family has over the years been misconstrued by some men as a right to be violent (Afshar 1998:160). Afshar (1998:160) goes on to say:

The combined belief in men's duty to protect the 'honour' of the family, which is believed to be always threatened by women, creates a context in which men assume the right to exact the ultimate price, in the name of 'protecting' the family and its honour.

The citation suggests that in some cases domestic violence is sanctioned as a measure of safeguarding the family honour. Mernissi (1975:61) believes that the Quran, in

Surah 4:34 recommends physical beating of wives but only as a last resort. Since, according to Surah 4:34, men can beat their disobedient wives, some men choose to exercise this privilege (Afshar 1998:161; Callaway & Creevey 1994:30). However, some Iranian Muslim women challenge the beating on the grounds that it has no doctrinal justification (Afshar 1998:128). Refusing to remain silent such women invoke the provisions of the Civil Code especially Article 1005 which stipulates a wife's right to leave the marital home if she is in danger of violence from her husband (Afshar 1998:145). In this case women can take advantage of the law. It should, however, be noted that the road towards receiving legal support is bumpy and Afshar (1998:145) notes that in the Iranian context this is a complex process. Similarly, Mernissi (1975:61) suggests that women are unlikely to obtain legal recourse in courts since charges of beating are seldom taken seriously and that this is compounded by the fact that a majority of judges are men who are unlikely to favour women in such cases.

In cases of rape, victims are sometimes charged with adultery because Islamic law does not always make a distinction between rape and adultery (Afshar 1998:173). In such cases, rather than being the recipient of the court's sympathy, the victim is considered as the agent. "Women in male spaces are considered both provocative and offensive" (Mernissi 1975:85), hence their seclusion and their limited assistance in the case of rape. In Northern Nigeria victims of rape sometimes do not report the violence for fear of being charged with *zina* (adultery) (Weimann 2009:430).

Generally violence against women is poorly legislated in Muslim countries (Kimani 2008:13). For instance, in Egypt domestic violence is not considered a crime. In this connection, Kort (2005:378) argues that the interpretation by Islamic scholars such as Badawi and Khan that "any form of beating is understood to mean a symbolic slap and that this should rarely, if ever, be necessary" is 'bitter sweet.' Kort here is saying that although the interpretation purports to condemn violence against women, it suggests some acceptance of some physical coercion as legitimate, thereby fostering unequal gender relations in Islam.

There is acknowledgement by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike that Muslim women face some challenges. However, Ernst (2004:151) advises that despite the

challenges facing Muslim women, it is important to avoid treating Islam as a prison from which Muslim women seek to be liberated.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The chapter has analysed some Quranic and Hadith texts that are used by both those who support the equal status of women in Islam and those who support the superiority of men over women. The chapter has showed that various interpretations of Islamic texts give rise to diverse ways in which women are treated in Islam. The picture that has emerged is that the status and role of women in Islam is not monolithic but varies according to interpretation and from community to community. While women in some Muslim countries have gained substantial rights, others have not. As Mohagheghi (2006:64) contends, “Islamic values can be heterogeneous. Muslim women are individuals with a variety of different forms of life which are influenced by different elements”. As such it is advisable to be cautious when drawing conclusions about the status of women in Islam.

This chapter is quite illuminating for the study in the sense that the status of women is bound to affect how they conceptualise and respond to domestic violence. This provided some frame of reference in the discussion of findings collected on domestic violence. The literature presented has shown the ambivalence of religion in the treatment of women. While in some contexts women enjoy some level of equality with men especially in non-Muslim countries such as South Africa, the lot of women is wretched in other countries such as Saudi Arabia and Northern Nigeria (Hausaland).

The forthcoming chapter surveys studies conducted on domestic violence and its intersection with religion.

CHAPTER 5: LITERATURE SURVEY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of women's lives and gender justice is an area that has attracted a great deal of attention and has been dealt with by many scholars from various perspectives. Within the field of Religious Studies, domestic violence is an issue that has also received a lot of attention from researchers both globally and locally (for example, Blake 2011; Nason-Clark 1999, 2004, 2009; Broderick 2007; Richardson 2007; Amenga-Etego 2006; Levitt & Ware, 2006a,b; Moyo 2004a,b; Knickmeyer, Levitt, Horne & Bayer 2003; Manetta, Bryant, Cavanaugh & Gange 2003; Horne & Levitt 2003; Phiri 2001, 2002; Maluleke & Nadar 2002; Stotland 2000; Armstrong 1998; Schlueter 1996; Whipple 1987). Since issues of faith are central to the experiences of many victims of domestic violence (Wendt 2008; NRCDV 2007a:2; Nason-Clark 2004:305), this chapter will survey literature on the interface between experiences of domestic violence, faith and the use of available legal resources.

The literature on domestic violence and religion was surveyed against the background view that, throughout history, religious beliefs, traditions and teachings have been used both to justify and to denounce the use of violence against women. The initial survey covered many studies with wide-ranging issues concerning domestic violence. The information was, however, distilled into themes that are relevant to the central aims of this study. The findings pertaining to these themes will provide the headings for the discussion to follow.

While the focus of this study is Zimbabwean women's experiences of domestic violence within the context of Christianity and Islam, this thematic survey covers information from multiple studies on violence and faith, both local and international. While domestic violence is a subject that is well documented, there is a dearth of Zimbabwean literature on the interaction between religion and domestic violence, especially as these relate to legal interventions.

5.2 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND RELIGION

5.2.1 Religion as supportive

5.2.1.1 Seeking assistance from religious communities and leaders

Religion has been shown to play a significant role in the lives of women of faith who fall victim to domestic violence. The literature surveyed shows that many religious victims of abuse want contact with their community of faith amidst their crisis (Choi 2011; Sisselman 2009; Wendt 2008; Beaulaurier, Seff, Newman & Dunlop 2007; Richardson 2007; Binford-Weaver 2005; Gustafon 2005; Shannon-Lewy & Dull 2005; Knickmeyer 2004; Rotunda et al 2004; Horne & Levitt 2003; Manetta et al 2003; Cooper-White 1996). Seeking assistance from church and mosque leaders in the face of domestic violence is indicative of the victims' perception of the religious institution and its leaders as supportive. In view of this, religious leaders have a significant role to play in dealing with domestic violence.

Nason-Clark¹⁶ and her colleagues, from a series of studies (1999, 2004, 2009) in Canada, under the auspice of Brunswick University, found that abused women often sought assistance from the church in the form of material, emotional and spiritual support (Nason-Clark, Mitchell & Beaman 2004:10).

A number of studies conducted in the American setting also showed that abused women turned to their religious communities when faced with domestic violence. Nicole Knickmeyer¹⁷, Heidi M. Levitt¹⁸, Sharon G. Horne¹⁹ and Gary Bayer²⁰, in a study they conducted in 2003 in the Memphis area in Tennessee, found that religious leaders were among the first persons to whom marital abuse was reported, an indicator of the victims' perception of religion as helpful (Knickmeyer et al 2003:32).

¹⁶ Nancy Nason-Clark is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Brunswick, Canada. She is the coordinator of the Religion and Violence Research Team at the University of Brunswick, Canada. Team members include Lori Beaman and Lois Mitchell.

¹⁷ Nicole Knickmeyer is coordinator of the Community Counselling Programme at the Austin Paey State University, Tennessee. She is a licensed marital and family therapist.

¹⁸ Heidi M. Levitt is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology, University of Memphis, Tennessee.

¹⁹ Sharon. G. Horne is a member of the Department of Psychology, University of Memphis, Tennessee.

²⁰ Gary Bayer is a member of the Department of Psychology, University of Memphis, Tennessee.

Knickmeyer's (2004:161) study, also conducted in Memphis, revealed that participants turned to their faith community for two reasons: that they had confidence in the church's support and guidance and that it was the first place they felt safe enough to disclose the abuse. Similar results emerged from a study that was conducted by Amy L. Gustafon²¹ among seminarians of various Christian affiliations in Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin. The study found that most abused women sought out clergy help at a higher rate than other helping institutions (Gustafon 2005:3). Similarly, a study conducted by Richard L. Beaulaurier²², Laura R. Seff²³, Frederick L. Newman²⁴, and Burton Dunlop²⁵, revealed that for participants in the study, that is older women who had experienced intimate partner violence, the 'first stop' would be a member of the clergy for spiritual guidance (Beaulaurier, Seff, Newman & Dunlop 2007:750). The study was conducted to find out external barriers to help seeking for older women who experience intimate partner violence in Miami-Dade County, a metropolitan area in Florida. In a recent study conducted among immigrant Korean ministers of religion in Virginia and Maryland, Yoon Joon Choi²⁶ found that many people turn to their faith and/or leaders for help and guidance in a time of crisis (Choi 2011:44).

A study conducted in Muslim communities by Salma Elkadi Abugideiri²⁷ on the interface between domestic violence and religion among abused Muslim women in Sterling, Virginia State, United States of America, found that victims often sought help from lay leaders and clergy, a finding that is consistent with that obtained in Christian communities.

²¹ Amy L. Gustafon conducted the study in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a doctoral dissertation submitted to the Alliant International University in Los Angeles, USA.

²²Richard L. Beaulaurier is a lecturer in the School of Social Work at Florida International University.

²³Laura R. Seff works at the Centre on Aging at the Stempel School of Public Health of Florida International University.

²⁴Frederick L. Newman is a lecturer in the School of Social Work at Florida International University.

²⁵Burton Dunlop works at the Centre on Aging at the Stempel School of Public Health of Florida International University.

²⁶ Yoon Joon Choi conducted the study in fulfilment of the requirements for a doctoral dissertation submitted to Virginia Commonwealth University, in Richmond, Virginia, USA.

²⁷Salma Elkadi Abugideiri is a Licensed Professional Counsellor whose private practice is in Sterling, VA. She works primarily with Muslim and Middle Eastern families, helping them to address marital, mental health, cultural adjustment, and other issues.

5.2.1.2 Encouragement to leave abusive relationships

Several studies under review show that, in some cases, religion can be the catalyst that encourages victims to leave abusive situations.

That religious leaders and/or scripture sometimes encourage victims of domestic violence to leave abusive relationships is clear from the study conducted by Rob J. Rotunda, Gail Williamson and Michelle Penfold²⁸(2004). The study revealed that an overwhelming majority (87% of 41) of religious leaders interviewed recommended separation from their abusers as well as encouraged victims to seek protection orders (Rotunda et al 2004:363). More than half of the religious leaders referred the participants to secular community resources, domestic violence programmes. Contrary to what most other studies revealed, Rotunda et al's (2004:363) study showed that most of those who sought help from clergy reported that they were satisfied with the assistance they received.

The empowering aspect of religion was also shown in Knickmeyer et al's (2003) investigation in the Memphis, area of Tennessee. The researchers investigated the relationship between religion and Christian battered women's experiences and found that all participants in the study believed that God did not want them to be abused. A study from the same geographical area by Knickmeyer (2004) revealed that participants' belief that God was their protector who did not want them to suffer abuse helped them to leave situations of abuse. When, in spite of advice to pray for God's intervention and endure domestic violence, victims "constructed a faith in which God hates abuse more than divorce", they left abusive marriages (Knickmeyer 2004:151). When prayer failed to transform their abusers, participants reportedly believed that God willed their survival and escape from abuse rather than transforming their violent partners (Knickmeyer 2004:65). This empowered them to take the necessary steps to end the abuse.

The positive use of religious resources to leave abusive relationships was also a finding from a study conducted by Shane Sharp among abused Christian women in different parts of the United States of America, including Tennessee, the context of

²⁸ Rob J. Rotunda, Gail Williamson and Michelle Penfold are lecturers in the Department of Psychology, University of West Florida, USA.

the preceding study. In this study, most participants who believed that God did not want them to suffer developed alternative meanings of Christian teachings which ultimately gave them the power to leave abusive partners (Sharp 2011:90).

Nada L. Stotland²⁹ (2000) reports on the counselling she did for an abused woman where she blended psychotherapy and theology and explained that the suffering the woman was experiencing at the hands of her husband was not willed by God. This eventually gave the woman the courage to leave the abusive marriage. Religion, through the affirmative scriptural interpretation by the victim's therapist, thus empowered the woman to act in her own interest (Stotland 2000:699). Biblical interpretations which challenge oppressive interpretations were therefore shown to replace disempowering interpretations with liberating ones, thereby enabling victims to move away from the abuse.

In 2007 Patricia Broderick also found that religious communities could empower the abused to free themselves from the abuse. In her study, a church programme helped victims of domestic abuse to take action based on more hopeful attitudes and behaviours (Broderick 2007:42). Broderick further remarked that women's faith can help them cope with domestic violence "if that faith experience is located in a context that teaches that domestic violence is not a punishment from God that requires submission to an abusive husband."

When clergy adopted an attitude that put the safety of the victims, instead of the marriage, first, Belinda Richardson (2007:101) found that they (the clergy) encouraged the women to leave situations of abuse.

In a study among 326 seminary students from a Protestant denomination in the south-eastern United States, Binford-Weaver³⁰ investigated factors that influenced seminary students' responses to domestic violence. It was found that those seminarians who endorsed lower levels of fundamentalism were more likely to encourage victims of intimate partner violence to take courses of action that might result in their liberation

²⁹ Nada L. Stotland is a medical doctor from the Department of Psychiatry, Illinois Masonic Medical Centre, Illinois, Chicago, USA. She writes from a psychological perspective.

³⁰ R. V Binford-Weaver conducted a study in fulfilment of the requirements for a doctoral thesis at the University of South Carolina.

from the violence. Such leaders tended to advise the victims to consult legal practitioners or call the police for help (Binford-Weaver 2005:100). Another American-based study that revealed that religious leaders emphasised safety for the abused and separation for the partners was conducted by Dyer (2010:43). In this study, participants reported that when called upon to assist abused women, they would be prepared to contact the police, support the victim through court proceedings and even recommend divorce (Dyer 2010:43). Similar results were obtained by Nicole Gilbert³¹ (2011:128) when she found that religious leaders strongly recommended that abused women get out of the abusive relationship for the sake of their safety. The recommendation was prompted by the understanding that the Bible taught love and that abuse of any kind was not love (Gilbert 2011:133). The study also revealed that in seeking to assist victims in leaving abusive situations, religious leaders recommended seeking help from outside the church, including police involvement (Gilbert 2011:130). Thus, they were open to outside intervention.

This sensitivity and support from clergy also emerged from the studies by Knickmeyer et al (2003) and Nason-Clark et al (2004). It can be concluded, from the preceding, that many abused women find religion to be an empowering force in their domestic situations.

5.2.2 Religion as unsupportive

A number of studies conducted across the world and in different racial, ethnic and cultural settings revealed that, in some ways religion promotes or condones domestic violence. Research has shown that religious teachings and practices are, to some extent, accountable for domestic violence among religious people.

5.2.2.1 Religious teachings as contributing to domestic violence

Religious teachings have often been cited as contributing to or condoning domestic violence and research has shown that religious ideology sometimes serves as a handmaid of perpetrators of domestic violence.

³¹Nicole Gilbert conducted the study in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a doctoral thesis submitted to Capella University in New York City.

One of the studies which revealed that religious teachings contribute to domestic violence, especially wife battering, was done by Vicky Whipple³² in 1987. Her study, conducted in an American context, was based on an examination of the teachings of fundamentalist churches in relation to battered women from these churches.

Like Whipple, Nason-Clark (1999) also conducted a study in North America and found that abused women were sometimes dissuaded by the teachings of their church which had the effect of discouraging them from seeking help outside the church. Similarly, a study conducted by Ameda A. Manetta, Dianne F. Bryant, Teresa Cavanaugh and Tracy-Ann Gange in 2003 in South Carolina, United States of America, confirmed the limited helpfulness of religion in the sense that a majority of battered women believed that church teaching contributed to domestic violence (Manetta et al 2003:18).

Another North American study whose findings implicate religious teachings for promoting violence against women was conducted by Knickmeyer and colleagues in 2003. The study revealed that participants believed that religious imperatives “to adopt a submissive position in relation to their male partners, to honour their marital vows, and to forgive violence perpetrated against them, served to implicitly condone and perpetuate domestic violence (Knickmeyer et al 2003:48). In a doctoral study she conducted among abused Christian women in Shelby County, Tennessee, Knickmeyer (2004:40) also found that male dominance advocated in Christian theology justified male control in the family which ultimately sows seeds of domestic violence. Participants in that study reported that religious teachings about male leadership and female submission were manipulated by their partners to control them and ultimately abuse them. As a consequence, they believed conformity to Biblical mandates of submission contributed to the incidence of spousal abuse. In a related study, Knickmeyer, Levitt and Horne (2010:110) found that Christian teachings and directives on male headship and female submissiveness within the family structures were invoked by abusive partners to legitimise violent behaviour. It can be inferred that such teachings tended to make women instruments in the hands of their husbands

³² Vicky Whipple, based in Canada, is a professional counsellor who writes from a social-scientific perspective.

thereby rendering them vulnerable to abuse in the event of failure to live up to their husbands' expectation.

Consistent with other studies conducted in the Memphis area, a study conducted by Heidi M. Levitt, Rebecca Todd Swanger and Jenny B. Butler³³, exploring a perspective rarely explored, that is, male perpetrators' perspective on the interface between domestic violence and religion, also revealed that the religious teaching on wifely submission contributed to domestic violence against women (Levitt, Swanger & Butler 2008:446).

In her South African study to determine the levels of domestic violence in Christian homes, Isabel Apawo Phiri³⁴ also found that religious teachings on the role of prayer, the need to endure suffering as a cross to bear and wifely submissiveness contributed to domestic violence and caused abused women to find it difficult to leave abusive situations (Phiri 2001:88). Like Phiri, Patricia Townsend³⁵ (2008) conducted an empirical study in the African context, focusing on Zimbabwe. The study showed how Christian beliefs and teachings on the place of women propelled domestic violence in families of faith (Townsend 2008:64).

It can be noted that religious teachings have the potential to propel domestic violence. Emphasis on wifely submission lays a fertile ground for domestic violence. As Borrowdale (1991:61) asserts, "If submission continues to be the 'theory' then abuse will inevitably continue to be the 'practice.'"

5.2.2.2 Blaming the victim and subsequent self-blame

A number of studies reveal that very often scriptures are used by abusers to justify the abuse and inculcate a feeling of guilt and worthlessness in the abused. In the light of this, religion was found to be no ally of the abused (Gonzalez 2010; Wendt 2008; Nason-Clark 1999, 2004, 2009; Richardson 2007; Mesatywa 2009; Amenga-Etego

³³ All three authors are based at the University of Memphis, Tennessee, USA.

³⁴ Isabel Apawo Phiri teaches African Theology in the School of Religion and Theology of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. She is also the Continental Coordinator of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

³⁵ Patricia Olwyn Townsend conducted an investigation on the position and role of women in selected denominations in Zimbabwe, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology in New Testament at the University of South Africa.

2006; Levitt & Ware 2006a,b; Abugideiri 2005; Knickmeyer 2004; Knickmeyer et al 2003; Maluleke & Nadar 2002; Stotland 2000; Whipple 1987). From the studies under review in this section, victims of domestic violence received no consolation from religion but were rather blamed for the abuse and encouraged to stay in abusive relationships. Where the victim is blamed, the implication is that the perpetrator is exonerated of violence and is in some way perceived as a victim of circumstances brought into being by the abused (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:13). This suggests a tendency to condone the violence.

In her study in Tennessee, Nicole Knickmeyer found that when victims of domestic violence turned to their faith communities for advice and support, they encountered victim-blaming attitudes, reflected by the advice that they should improve their conduct to avoid further violence (Knickmeyer 2004:161). Levitt and Ware (2006), in the same geographical area, in a study among religious leaders of diverse faiths, also found that religious leaders had the tendency to blame victims of domestic violence for their abuse (Levitt & Ware 2006a:220). Similar findings were obtained from a study conducted by Amy L. Gustafon in which it emerged that seminarians holding conservative beliefs regarding sex-roles tended to blame the victim for the occurrence of intimate partner violence (Gustafon 2005:89). The victim-blaming attitudes also surfaced in a study by Naheed S. Sheikh³⁶ among five abused Muslim women in Northern California (Sheikh 2008:91). This victim-blaming attitude made the participants feel rejected and disempowered by their imams, leading to their seeking of help elsewhere, including police intervention.

Knickmeyer (2004:161) observes that when victims of domestic violence are held responsible for their abuse, they tend to shy away from speaking out about the abuse due to feelings of shame but when they see the cause of violence as external to them, they are likely to take steps to end the abuse (see Sharp 2011:90; Holmes 2004:44).

Jaime Gonzalez³⁷, who conducted a study on battered Latina women's experiences in Lincoln, Nebraska, also found that clergy, like family members, blamed the abused

³⁶Naheed S. Sheikh conducted the study to fulfil requirements of a doctoral degree at the Wright Institute Graduate School of Psychology.

³⁷ Jaime Gonzalez reports on findings obtained from a study conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a doctoral degree at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

for their suffering. The clergy advised the women to go back home to their husbands and try to fix whatever is wrong (Gonzalez 2010:87).

Apart from religious leaders and communities, abusers also blamed their victims. A study by Nason-Clark revealed that generally there was reluctance among batterers to assume responsibility for their actions hence their propensity to blame their victims for the abuse (Nason-Clark 2009:385). This tendency was also prominent in the study by Sarah Wendt³⁸ (2008:151) which explored the impact of the local culture, heavily influenced by Christianity (in the Barossa village, Adelaide, South Australia). In her analysis of factors that underlie the abuse of women by their husbands in Muslim marriages, Hendricks (1998:2) also noted that there is a tendency to blame victims, attributing the misfortune to their laxity in executing the tenets of Shariah. This silencing of women is also expressed by Abugideiri (2005:2) who also suggests that abused Muslim women often believe the abusers who justify their abuse by referring to texts from the Quran. They also tend to blame themselves for not being patient enough, or understanding enough, to help their husbands change their behaviour.

It is worth noting that victim-blaming attitudes worsen the predicament of the abused. As can be noted, it is not only abusers who blame their victims. Religious communities and the abused themselves also tend to blame the victim, thus encouraging the perpetuation of domestic violence.

5.2.2.3 Encouragement to stay in relationships

Research shows that religious teachings and the advice given by religious communities to victims of domestic violence have the effect of making it difficult, if not impossible, for abused women to leave abusive situations. Many studies show that some religious leaders influenced victims of domestic violence to continue abusive marriages, which caused them to be subject to further abuse.

In an early study of battered Christian women who came for counselling, Whipple (1987:252-256) found that the teachings of fundamentalist churches tended to encourage victims of domestic violence to stay in abusive relationships. The headship/submission teaching that the husband has the God-given right to make all

³⁸ Sarah Wendt is a holder of a doctoral degree and is a lecturer at the school of social work and Social Policy, University of South Australia.

final decisions in the family, relatively negative attitudes about divorce and towards divorced people, emphasis on forgiveness of the perpetrator, and the teaching that prayer can change anything, all make it difficult for abused women to leave situations of abuse. Nason-Clark and her team reported that women from evangelical churches sometimes felt disheartened by what they perceived as the teachings of their church which discouraged them from leaving abusive relationships (Nason-Clark 1999:46). Most pastors were found to be reluctant to see even a violent marriage ending in divorce (Nason-Clark 1999:51). Nason-Clark's (2009) study on the responses of the clergy to domestic violence found that religious leaders find it difficult to see their intervention as successful if the marriage ends in divorce.

Confirmation of the Canadian study comes from several other studies. The abuse of religious scriptures to justify violent behaviour was a key factor in Nada L. Stotland's case study. This showed that the abusive husband attended Bible classes, and found Biblical injunctions to support his domination and control over his wife. Furthermore, he invoked Biblical passages about a wife's duty to submit and stay married to her husband since "God hates divorce" (a reference to Malachi 2:16). This case thus illustrates how abusers can invoke scriptures to justify their behaviour and discourage their victims from taking actions that would enable them to leave abusive situations. When victims of domestic violence regard divorce as sin and leaving a violent marriage under any circumstance as resulting in God's anger, they are not likely to take the initiative to end the violent relationship (Ramsay 1999:36).

In confirmation of previous findings, a study conducted by Knickmeyer et al (2003) among abused Christian women from diverse racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds in the Memphis area, Tennessee, revealed that religious imperatives to women to honour their marital vows and to forgive violence perpetrated against them, served to implicitly discourage them from leaving abusive relationships (Knickmeyer et al 2003:49). In a related study, Knickmeyer (2004:7) found that some victims of domestic violence in the Memphis area eschewed separation from their spouses because of the churches' prioritisation of marriage over the safety of the abused. Religious leaders were found to advise participants to remain in the marriage and pray for God to change the abuser (Knickmeyer 2004:79). It also became clear that the internalisation of Christian teachings on the family as a sacred institution as well as

the sinfulness of divorce made it difficult for some participants to seek relief from the abusive relationship.

Like Knickmeyer and colleagues (2003), Heidi M. Levitt and Kimberly N. Ware (2006a) also conducted a study in Tennessee, in the United States. However, while Knickmeyer and colleagues investigated abused Christian women, Levitt and Ware's study involved religious leaders from diverse faiths namely, Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths who were interviewed about their understanding of the intersection of intimate partner violence and religion. Levitt and Ware's (2006a) study revealed that, while all the religious leaders were concerned about domestic violence and wanted to end the violence, most of these leaders were generally hesitant about advocating divorce due to domestic violence (Levitt & Ware 2006a:221).

Yet a further study in the Memphis area by Knickmeyer and colleagues (2010) showed that abused women may be discouraged by their faith and faith communities to take action that might help them leave abusive situations. Results of this study showed that Christian beliefs, shared by both religious leaders and their congregants, on the sanctity of marriage (resulting in the prioritisation of marriage), male dominance and the need to forgive partners' violence, created an environment which compromised participants' ability to reach out for support and 'break from the abuser' (Knickmeyer et al 2010:103). It also appeared that the participants themselves also internalised religious beliefs about forgiveness and the sacredness of marriage, which contributed to their being trapped in abusive relationships.

Further findings on the belief in the sacredness of marriage were also obtained from the American settings other than the Memphis area. A study conducted by Holmes (2004:42) indicated that participants felt that their religious leaders put them in a very difficult situation when they emphasised the sanctity of marriage, thus putting pressure on them to stay in marriage despite the abuse. Participants' internalised beliefs on marriage and divorce created problems for them as they sought relief from the abuse (Holmes 2004:52). Catholic participants reported that their predicament was worsened by their priests' decree that divorcees were not eligible to receive communion or to participate in any church activities (Holmes 2004:42).

As with Holmes (2004), Sheikh (2008) carried out a study in the state of California. While the two studies focused on women from different religions, with Holmes

investigating Christian women while Sheikh investigated Muslim women, they both concluded that religious leaders discouraged abused women from taking actions that might result in divorce or separation. Divorce was discouraged as it was perceived as distorting the purpose of marriage (Sheikh 2008:75). That this lack of support for divorce by religious leaders discouraged abused women from leaving abusive marriages was confirmed by Gustafon (2005:91) and Kulwicki³⁹, Aswad⁴⁰, Carmona⁴¹ and Ballout⁴² (2010). Like Naheed Sheikh, Kulwicki and colleagues carried out their study in an American, Arab-Muslim setting. The study involved a sample of 65 Arab women in the Arab-Immigrant community of Detroit in the state of Michigan. Designed to explore barriers in the utilisation of domestic violence services among Arab immigrant women, the study showed that in most cases abused women were prevented from seeking help by their religious leaders who stressed the need to preserve marriage and to try to improve their conduct to prevent further violence (Kulwicki et al 2010:733).

Consistent with all these studies, Binford-Weaver (2005:99) who did research in the south-eastern United States found that when religious advisors, seminary students in this case, hold very strong beliefs about the indissolubility of marriage on the understanding that the marriage union is a sacred bond, the tendency is to advise victims of domestic violence to keep their marriages at all cost. Some victims were therefore advised against seeking legal assistance, effectively encouraging them to endure the suffering. These findings were confirmed by Richardson (2007), Wendt (2008), Gonzalez (2010) and Lockette (2012).

In a study among abused Muslim women in Sterling, Virginia, Abugideiri's (2005:2) findings echo those obtained on Christian women. Religion was also found to be an ally of the abuser, who used scriptures to justify the abuse, thereby preventing the

³⁹ Anahid Kulwicki is Director of Graduate Nursing Programs in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Florida International University.

⁴⁰ Barbara Aswad is a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

⁴¹ Talita Carmona is a lecturer in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Florida State University, Florida.

⁴² Suha Ballout works in the Nursing Services, American University of Beirut Medical Center in Beirut, Lebanon.

abused from leaving the relationship. Surah 4:34 in the Quran, which prescribes wife-beating as a (last) resort when dealing with a disobedient wife, is a case in point. A study by Hillary Potter⁴³, which also involved Muslim participants, confirmed the results of Abugideiri's study. Potter's (2007) study, conducted in Denver in Colorado, showed that a majority of abused Muslim women who sought assistance from clergy reported that they were told to remain in the relationship and work things out (Potter 2007:272).

Similar findings were also obtained in studies conducted in the African context (for example, Armstrong 1998; Maluleke & Nadar 2002; Phiri 2002, 2001; Amenga-Etego 2006).

One of the significant studies on domestic violence in Zimbabwe was conducted by the Musasa Project⁴⁴ in 1998 (Armstrong 1998:26). Although the study did not particularly consider the interface between religion and violence, it yielded results that have a bearing on the current study. It revealed that religion was responsible for condoning silence about domestic abuse. As religion discourages divorce and the breakup of the family, those who are abused will shy away from reporting it as this is considered to result in marital dissolution.

Tinyiko Sam Maluleke⁴⁵ and Sarojini Nadar⁴⁶ conducted a domestic violence related study in South Africa in 2002. The study involved the stories of two women who were victims of domestic violence. The advice given to these women by both pastors and lay people was that they should not abandon their marriages but, instead, they were to work hard to save their marriages since divorce was against God's will. Several Biblical mandates were cited to justify the abuse. The first was the headship of the male over the female and secondly, that divorce was not permissible. The Christian faith and its theology, as articulated by pastors in the study in question, reinforced the

⁴³ Hillary Potter is a member of staff at the University of Colorado, USA.

⁴⁴ Musasa Project is a Zimbabwean non-governmental organisation that provides temporary shelter to victims of domestic violence

⁴⁵ Tinyiko Sam Maluleke is a Professor in the Department of Missiology in the Faculty of Theology and Biblical Religions, University of South Africa.

⁴⁶ Sarojini Nadar is coordinator of the International Network of Advanced Theological Education and lecturer in Old Testament at the School of Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

idea of male supremacy in marriage. The pastors used scripture to ‘prove’ that the women were wrong to complain and to question their husbands’ right to violate them. Instead, they were advised to adjust to their (husbands’) moods, their likes and dislikes and, in that way, avoid beatings. The pastor’s advice, “Anyone who is involved in trying to separate a couple would face the ‘wrath of God’ because ‘which two God has joined together, let no ‘man’ put asunder’” (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:9, 11), shows reluctance by religious leaders to advocate that these marriages end in divorce.

In the two stories cited, the authors argue that religion has been no ally of abused women because religion can be used to perpetuate abuse. It can serve as a roadblock to those seeking relief from violence. Victims of domestic violence may feel that they are meant to suffer at the hands of their abusers because an interpretation of their religion permits it, or that the abuse is a form of punishment for their failure to live their lives according to their faith (NRCDV 2007a:1). The stories illustrated the inner struggles of the women who were victims of abuse. On the one hand, Christianity teaches non-violence and, on the other hand, the abused were told to stay because to leave would compromise their beliefs.

In her study to explore the interface between experiences of domestic violence and religious teachings, Phiri (2002) found that religious teachings tended to condone domestic violence as the two women under investigation were told by their husbands (who were clergymen) to be subservient as the Bible taught.

Amenga-Etego (2006) reported on a study conducted by the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture, between 2001 and 2004, on violence against women in Ghana. The study focused on abused Christian women to find out how they and the church responded to violence. Once again, the abused women in the study under review reported that they were encouraged to honour their marriage vows by not seeking divorce. They were told by their pastors to go home, pray for their husbands and make peace with them.

In another African study on the position and role of women in specific religious denominations, Townsend (2008:64) found that, by teaching that marriage was a sacrament and that divorce was immoral, the Roman Catholic Church covertly encouraged women to stay in abusive marriages (Townsend 2008:64). This finding on

the Catholic attitude towards marriage and divorce confirmed findings from an earlier American study by Emilee L. Thompson (2001). The study revealed that Catholic priests, viewing marriage as a sacred covenant and lifelong commitment, strived to preserve marriage. As such, their advice to abused women was to the effect that the abused remained in the home (Thompson 2001:82). By discouraging divorce, the church discourages victims of domestic violence from seeking help that will enable them to move out of the abusive relationship. Consequently, some people do not open up to church leadership or church members for fear of being labelled as failures.

The tendency to encourage victims to stay in abusive relationships seems to suggest the tolerance of domestic abuse or its trivialisation by religious leaders.

It can be concluded that religion can prevent abused women from leaving abusive relationships in many ways. Religious texts and teachings, the advice from religious communities especially religious leaders and the abused's internalised beliefs, including their perception of marriage and divorce as well as the role of prayer, all prevent abused women from escaping abusive situations.

5.2.2.4 Many religious leaders lack adequate training

Nason-Clark and her team, in a series of studies conducted in Canada under the banner of the University of Brunswick Domestic Violence Research Team in 1999 and 2004, found that the lack of support experienced by abused women in the church could be a function of the clergy's lack of training in handling domestic violence. Pastors in the study reported being regularly called upon to respond to the needs of abused women but they themselves felt that they were not well-equipped to do so. The research also indicated that the more knowledgeable the clergy person is about abuse, the more likely he or she is to refer abused women to secular resources. However, it was noted that in the area where the study was conducted there was a gulf between the community and the church as there was no collaboration between the church and non-religious institutions in addressing the problem of domestic violence (Nason-Clark et al 2004:19).

Findings in which the lack of training on the part of pastors served as an impediment to effective counselling of abused women also emerged from other studies

(Knickmeyer et al 2003; Rotunda et al 2004; Brade 2009; Kulwicki et al 2010; Gilbert 2011; Choi 2011).

From Brade's (2009) study it was clear that clergy felt that they lacked knowledge and adequate skills necessary to properly intervene in domestic violence situations. As such, they noted the necessity of education on domestic violence. Kulwicki et al's (2010) study indicated that the training of clergy would enable them to create a more supportive atmosphere for victims of domestic violence. Similarly, Gilbert's (2011) study showed that religious leaders realised their own inadequacy to address domestic violence. In this study religious leaders declared that they did not have all the answers to domestic violence and neither did they have adequate skills necessary to effectively deal with domestic violence.

Findings from Phiri's (2001:98) African-based study of abused Christian women in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, echoed those from the United States. The study found that some religious leaders to whom abused women turned were not trained in counselling at all, thus rendering them incapable of effectively assisting abused women who sought their counsel.

It, therefore, appears that the lack of training of pastors in the issue of domestic violence might lead to pastors suggesting solutions that are not appropriate for abused women. However, while this is not the only variable to consider in the light of clergy responses, it offers some explanation for their misplaced advice.

5.2.2.5 Discouraging victims from seeking secular assistance

Closely related to the two previous issues, is the matter of religious leaders who actively discourage women to seek secular solutions to their plight. A number of studies, conducted in both African and non-African contexts, showed that religious leaders could serve as impediments in abused women's struggle against domestic violence (Nason-Clark et al 1999, 2004 & 2009; Levitt & Ware 2006a,b; Knickmeyer et al 2003; Rotunda et al 2004; Phiri 2002, 2001; Thompson 2001; Whipple 1987). These studies showed that many pastors or religious leaders did not refer abused women to secular community-based agencies. Instead, they sought to maintain the integrity of their religious communities by advising the abused to seek religious solutions such as prayer and looking to God for their problems.

Whipple (1987:252) found that fundamentalist churches discouraged the use of secular institutions by victims of domestic violence. They tended to encourage their members to seek help only from their pastor or fellow church members as attempts to seek help outside the church were seen as a lack of faith. Nason-Clark (1999:45) stated that the minister of religion normally perceives domestic violence as having spiritual causes and, as such, he saw himself as someone who could successfully address disturbances in a religious family. In the light of this, pastors were loath to refer abused women to non-religious institutions; they were not willing to see non-religious agencies or secular professionals working among their flock and they seemed to be suspicious of these professionals. Similar findings were obtained from Thompson's (2001:85) study in which participants (Catholic clergy) were reported to be unwilling to recommend that an abused woman call the police or a lawyer, preferring to deal with the problem themselves. From Beaulaurier et al's (2007:750) study in Florida, it appeared that none of the participants indicated that they had been referred by clergy to secular agencies. As a result, victims of abuse found it difficult to seek assistance from the police or legal practitioners.

As in Christian-based studies, Sheikh's Muslim-based study revealed that police intervention was not welcome by imams who regarded it as counter-cultural, as exposing both the abused and her family to shame (Sheikh 2008:77).

The picture that emerges is that some victims of domestic violence, who may otherwise intend to use legal provisions to seek redress in the face of domestic violence, are prevented from doing so and this results in the abused staying in the abusive relationship.

5.2.3 Religion as both helpful and unhelpful in the face of domestic violence

That religion can be ambivalent in the lives of victims of domestic violence is evident from many studies (Nason-Clark 2009, Abugideiri 2005; Rotunda et al 2004; Holmes 2004; Horne & Levitt 2003; Knickmeyer et al 2003; Stotland 2000; Phiri 2002; Cunradi et al 2002). This ambivalence can bring confusion to victims.

Two types of advice particularly drew mixed responses from women participating in these studies, namely the exhortation to prayer and the encouragement to enter counselling.

5.2.3.1 Prayer

Prayer emerged as an important coping mechanism for some abused women of faith (for example, Duley 2012; Gilbert 2011; Sharp 2011; Brade 2009; Gillum 2009; Amenga-Etego 2006; Walington & Murphy 2006; Arokach 2006; Copeland-Linder 2006; Holmes 2004; Knickmeyer 2004).

In Knickmeyer's (2004:63) study among abused women in the Memphis area in Tennessee, the participants reported that they prayed to God in the anticipation that God would intervene to stop the abuser's violent crime. These prayers were motivated by the belief that God was near, thus reducing the abused's sense of isolation (2004:6365). In a related study conducted from a psychological perspective, Michelle D. Mitchell, Gabrielle L. Hargrove, Marietta H. Collins, Martie P. Thompson, Tiffany L. Reddick and Nadine J. Kaslow, found that abused women often made use of prayer to cope with their stress (Mitchell, Hargrove, Collins, Thompson, Reddick, & Kaslow 2006:1505).

The significance of prayer was confirmed by Walington and Murphy in 2006. Their study investigated the role of religion and spirituality among female African American survivors of intimate partner violence in Maryland and Washington, D. C. The study revealed that prayer was not only one of the coping strategies used by the abused but that it reduced levels of depression among the victims (Walington & Murphy 2006:841). That prayer, as a coping strategy, was important for victims of domestic violence was obtained from other studies conducted in an African American setting (Brade 2009; Gillum 2009).

Yet other studies that confirmed the victims' perception of the helpfulness of prayer, this time in an African setting, were those by Rosemary Amenga-Etego (2006) in Ghana and Nikeea Copeland-Linder (2006) in a South African township (Soweto). These studies reported that abused women found prayer to be helpful as a coping mechanism in times of stress.

A related study conducted in a Canadian setting by Ami Arokach⁴⁷ confirmed previous findings and suggested that prayer, either individually or in a place of worship, could assist abused women to cope with feeling helpless, dominated, depressed and alienated (Arokach 2006:335).

In a study recently conducted by Sharp (2011) in different parts of the United States of America, the participants reported that interactions with God through prayer provided them with someone great, loving, caring and non-judgemental, to whom they could express and vent their anger (Sharpe 2011:45). For these victims, prayer helped them to overcome negative feelings of sadness and depression. Sharp (2011:57) also found that for some victims prayer provided a sense of protection and this sense of protection gave them the strength and courage to confront dangerous situations and leave their abusive partners. Holmes found in a study that her participants regarded prayer as a resource for strength as well as an opportunity for things to change (Holmes 2004:44). However, it turned out that for most of these participants prayer did not always yield the desired results. Other studies that note that prayer is not always experienced as effective are those by Holmes (2004), Knickmeyer (2004), and Nash and Hesterberg (2009). Nicole Gilbert found that even clergy pointed out that prayer alone would probably not remedy incidence of domestic violence (Gilbert 2011:128). Taylor (2010:121) writes that when women put their power of change in God's hands, they are left "waiting and enduring rather than actively seeking out resources, support and options". This implies that they become helpless and so continue to live in abusive situations.

5.2.3.2 Pastoral counselling

One of the responses to domestic violence by religious leaders was to offer counselling to victims and their partners. While this response was not particularly prevalent in the literature, it is significant as it shows commitment by religious leaders to see an end to the violence.

Based on a study that was conducted to find out what the contribution of religious factors to intimate partner violence are among a sample of 1 440 US couples, Carol B.

⁴⁷ Ami Arokach researches from a social scientific perspective.

Cunradi⁴⁸, Raul Caetano⁴⁹ and John Schafer⁵⁰(2002) concluded that couples counselling by clergy could be effective in preventing as well as addressing domestic violence (Cunradi et al 2002:149). Another study that showed the place of pastoral counselling in domestic violence situations was carried out by Holmes (2004). In this study, two of the participants reported that they had received counselling from religious counsellors and that this had helped them cope with the abuse. One of the participants indicated that her husband's behaviour changed as a result of the counselling (Holmes 2004:42).

Another United States based study in which the issue of counselling emerged was conducted by Rotunda et al (2004). The study, which was aimed at investigating Christian clergy's response to domestic violence, revealed that a majority (93%) of religious leaders recommended couples counselling as a remedy to domestic violence (Rotunda et al 2004:363). A related study conducted in Ohio by Thompson (2001:83) showed that Catholic priests who participated in the study felt that offering counselling to victims and their partners was an appropriate means for ending the violence as well as promoting an atmosphere of warmth in the marriage. Similar findings were obtained from a study by Jacqueline Dyer⁵¹ (2010) in north-eastern USA. This study, designed to increase understanding of the perspectives and practices of African-American Protestant clergy regarding domestic violence, revealed that clergy generally offered counselling to victims of domestic violence (Dyer 2010:43).

In a related study conducted by Albert Hung-shing Ko⁵² (2007) among clergy at Chinese churches in Los Angeles and San Diego Counties, it appeared that in their determination to preserve marriage, religious leaders made efforts to provide various forms of marital counselling to assist couples to have stronger relationships (Ko 2007:44). Choi (2011), who studied clergy of Asian origin in Virginia and Maryland,

⁴⁸ Carol B. Cunradi is an Associate Research Scientist, Prevention and Research Centre, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, USA.

⁴⁹ Raul Caetano is Assistant Dean, Dallas MPH Program, The University of Texas School of Public Health, USA.

⁵⁰ John Schafer is Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Cincinnati, USA.

⁵¹ Jacqueline Dyer works at the Boston College, Massachusetts. The study was conducted from a theological perspective.

⁵² Albert Hung-shing Ko conducted the study to fulfil requirements for a Master's degree submitted to California State University, USA.

found similar results. He found that the participant clergy would recommend counselling with a view to keeping the couple together (Choi 2011:138).

It should, however, be noted that couple counselling was not always effective as can be noted from Knickmeyer's (2004) study. Participants revealed that marriage counselling was not successful in reducing their partners' violent behaviour. Instead the violence often escalated (Knickmeyer 2004:105). In a similar vein, Thompson (2001:82) states that those who view domestic violence from a feminist perspective would also not recommend couples counselling since it tends to incriminate the victim by removing the sole responsibility from the abuser. According to Choi (2011:148), emphasis on couples counselling signified the belief that divorce was not an option for Christians. In this connection, one would be tempted to suggest that emphasis on couples counselling could be a stumbling block to those who desired freedom from domestic abuse. Thus, while religious leaders may mean well by their advice, this may yield unintended results in the continuation of violence.

5.2.3.3 Mixed advice

In the case of Nason-Clark et al's (2004) study conducted in the Atlantic provinces of Canada, it was found that victims of domestic violence received mixed advice from their religious leaders. There were conflicting responses on the kind of support abused women received from the church and the diversity reflects the complexities and ambiguities in understanding the relationship between violence and the religious responses to its victims (Nason-Clark et al 2004:10). On the one hand, the victims were accused of incurring the violence through insubordination and they were advised to try to be better wives and not seek divorce. On the other hand, they were empowered to leave abusive situations. Nason-Clark (1999:50) remarks that some women experienced the church as a 'safe haven' and a source of refuge, while others felt it was not a safe place at all.

Abugideiri's (2005) study among Muslim women revealed the ambivalence with which religious communities responded to victims. It showed that religious leaders' responses to incidents of domestic violence were as varied as the Muslim community was diverse. At one end of the spectrum, a victim may find her community to be completely invalidating of her experience, and even blame her for angering her husband. An imam might insist that she be patient, return to her husband and try

harder to please him, while at the other end of the spectrum the *imam* might encourage her to call the police if she felt threatened in any way, and local families might offer to provide her with shelter (Abugideiri 2005:4). The study showed that Islam, through its clergy and lay leaders, could be a source of consolation for a victim of abuse or could cause more discomfort to the victim. Knickmeyer et al's (2003) study, already referred to above, found that the relationship between religion and Christian battered women's experiences of domestic violence was highly complex and often paradoxical. It emerged that when the battered women turned to their community and faith leaders, they were met with a wide array of responses, ranging from emotional support to advice that put them at risk of more abuse. Mixed messages from religious leaders also came out of Knickmeyer's study which revealed that religious teachings and communities both empowered abused women to escape violent lives and in some way served to "prolong a woman's exposure to life-threatening violence" (Knickmeyer 2004:161).

5.3 THE COLLUSION OF RELIGION AND CULTURE IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

It is necessary to take into consideration the interrelatedness of culture and religion in exploring the patriarchal roots of domestic violence. A number of studies revealed that religion and culture worked hand in hand in both the promotion of domestic violence and in deterring the abused to seek legal recourse.

Phiri's (2001) study showed that both religion and culture were at variance with publicising domestic violence by taking legal action. The study revealed that very often abused women were not willing to take the matter to the police in order to maintain the integrity of the family as well as that of their religion.

In their study on the domestic abuse of two Christian women in South Africa, Maluleke and Nadar (2002:9) found that, apart from the religious factor, the cultural influence also played a compelling role in perpetuating violence and preventing women from taking the initiative to stop the violence. For example, when one of the women was beaten, some members of her family justified the abuse on the basis that, according to their culture, she was not a good wife. The family members' view that

the woman had not adequately played the role of a wife was reiterated by the pastor. Thus voices emanating from religion and culture had the effect of urging the abused woman to stay in the abusive relationship (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:9).

In her analysis of the church's response to domestic violence, Amenga-Etego (2006:38) also found that religion colluded with culture to silence abused women and to prevent them from laying charges against their husbands. Thus, the study, conducted in a Ghanaian setting, revealed that pastors and other religious leaders to whom abused women turned for help would not approve of seeking advice from secular institutions such as the courts or the police as this made private matters public.

Relevant to this matter, the study by Sicily Mbura Muriithi⁵³ (2008) conducted on the vulnerability and capability of women in Kenya, East Africa, revealed that legal proceedings were difficult for victims who indicated that they did not have the strength to pursue this course because they had been socialised to believe that silence was power and that a good wife was one who remained silent on personal issues; one who kept secret what happened within the family circle. The study also indicated that some victims did not foresee solutions to their marital problems because the church and society usually blamed women for such problems (Muriithi 2008:63).

In similar vein, Fiorenza (1995b:128) shows how culture and religion in many societies 'joined hands' in exposing women to domestic violence. She suggests that culture and religion mandated that a woman would have a husband and children and it was this mandate that rendered women vulnerable to domestic violence. She states that "women continually place themselves in harm's way because culture and religion tell them they are nothing without a man or without children."

Given that religion and culture both support male dominance which is conducive to violence against women, Maluleke and Nadar (2002:14) characterised the relationship between religion and culture as 'an unholy alliance'. Recognising that religion and culture provided tools of meaning-making, of what it meant to be human and to be alive, Maluleke and Nadar (2002:15) suggested that these two aspects of life were indispensable but they needed to be re-orientated so that they became life-affirming for victims of abuse. They stated that "what we need are deconstructive and counter-

⁵³ Muriithi conducted the study as a doctoral student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

strategies from within culture and religion”, and then went on to illustrate how the practices of Jesus Christ were the epitome of deconstructive, counter-cultural strategies (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:16).

Reporting on a study they conducted to determine the utilisation of domestic violence services among Arab immigrant women, mostly Muslim, in Michigan State, USA, Kulwicki et al (2010:728) noted that cultural and religious factors combined to promote tolerance of, and silence about domestic violence.

It can, therefore, be concluded that the literature shows that culture and religion complement each other in perpetuating domestic violence. Within the African context, religion and culture may be so close that it is difficult to separate them.

5.4 LACK OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTIONS

The literature also showed that there was a need to employ both religious (spiritual) and secular (non-religious) interventions to effectively address domestic violence. In this connection, Fortune (1984:18) asserted, “to fully provide for the needs of victims and abusers, pastors and lay counsellors need to be aware of and make use of secular resources for shelter, legal advocacy and treatment”. In the same vein, Cooper-White (1996:17) wrote “[t]he whole phenomenon of battering, and of violence against women in general, needs to be approached as much from the discipline of social and political ethics as from the field of pastoral psychology”. The point raised here is that domestic violence was a problem that should be addressed using both spiritual and social/legal instruments and agencies.

The study conducted by Nason-Clark (2009) to explore the relationship between Christianity and experiences of domestic violence, concluded that a coordinated response to domestic violence would go a long way in assisting victims and their abusers. It emerged that it was essential for the religious leader to be informed and comfortable with referring parishioners to community agencies that worked with victims or abusers and it was essential to include religious leaders as part of any collaborative community response to domestic violence. Breaking the cycle of violence often requires both the input of secular culture and support from the religious

community and its leadership (Nason-Clark 2009:389). When religious leaders cooperated with secular organisations, the help they provided to victims and their families became comprehensive (Holmes 2004:57). Nason-Clark concluded that ending domestic violence involved the entire community, both religious and secular. This point was underscored by Fortune and Enger (2005:5) who asserted that clergy and secular advocates and services needed each other to effectively empower abused women to leave abusive situations. The need for collaboration between clergy and social workers was indicated in Brade's (2009:128) study where it was suggested that the collaboration would assist the stakeholders to understand the balance that should exist between human experiences and service provision and so adequately cater for the needs of victims. Similar findings came from Gilbert's (2011:143) study which indicated that collaboration between religious practitioners and practitioners in the field of social work was necessary to effectively deal with domestic violence. Suggesting that the exclusion of other stakeholders rendered their efforts to address domestic violence ineffective, ministers of religion in Choi's (2011:149) study indicated that there was need to work with other professionals such as domestic violence programs, the police and therapists.

In confirmation of the foregoing, Blake's (2011) study that was conducted in Atlanta, Georgia, to explore the experiences of abused African-American women who utilised faith-based resources, concluded that domestic violence was "a complex social problem that needs to be addressed on multiple levels through the use of collaborations and partnerships" (Blake 2011:39). The implication of this was that domestic violence was a phenomenon that should be understood in terms of multiple causations. This conceptualisation of domestic violence makes it necessary to adopt a multi-sectoral approach in an attempt to address it. Thus, different specialisations need to be integrated for the problem to be addressed effectively.

Furthermore, Horne and Levitt (2003:94), in their analysis of findings from three studies conducted in Tennessee, to investigate religious methods of coping with or preventing intimate partner violence, concluded that the integration of religious and secular interventions was necessary for a holistic solution to intimate partner violence. They advised:

While faith leaders may be instrumental in supporting victims' spiritual and emotional connections, they may not be able to provide shelter, police protection, and legal advocacy for victims. Advocating for a purely theological response to intimate partner violence minimises the lethality of IPV (Horne & Levitt 2003:94).

In conclusion, much of the literature underscored the need for both religious leaders and secular agencies such as counsellors and the police to work together towards alleviating the problem of domestic violence.

5.5 GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

The literature surveyed has provided many useful insights on the interface between religion and women's experiences of domestic violence and the extent to which such women take advantage of the laws aimed at alleviating the plight of the abused. Religion and spirituality have been found to be sometimes helpful and sometimes unhelpful to religious women who find themselves victims of domestic violence. The studies reviewed range in magnitude from single case studies (Stotland 2000) to extensive surveys involving more than 200 people (for example Nason-Clark and colleagues 1999, 2004, 2009). All these were insightful in one way or the other. However, in spite of this, gaps in information were identified and these served as part of the rationale for the current study.

The qualitative methodology employed in some studies recorded in the literature has inspired the current study which is also qualitative. For example, qualitative research studies by: Knickmeyer et al (2003) which involved ten participants of diverse ethnic backgrounds within Christianity; Levitt and Ware (2006a) which involved interviews with 25 religious leaders from Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths to evaluate their understanding of the intersection of intimate partner violence and religion; and Phiri (2001) conducted in Durban to find out, from 25 Christian women, the extent of domestic violence in Christian homes and the response to such. Notwithstanding these significant contributions to the current study, such studies (and others reviewed) were found to be limited in some way or another. Knickmeyer et al's study was confined to Christian women. Levitt and Ware's study involved more than one religion, its focus being on religious leaders and not abused women. Phiri's study involved only

Christian women. Sheikh's (2008) study involved only Muslims. Several studies in this review focused on case studies of one or two women. Although such studies are extremely valuable for their depth perspective, they do not provide for a broad perspective on issues. The following studies fall under this category: Stotland (2000) – 1 woman; Schlueter (1996) – 2 women; Broderick (2007) – 2 women; Moyo (2004) – 1 woman; Phiri (2002) – 2 women; and Maluleke and Nadar (2002) – 2 women. Furthermore, all these studies focused on Christianity only.

After researching and reviewing numerous articles related to domestic violence against women both locally and internationally, it became evident that there was a need for a better understanding of the perceptions of domestically abused Zimbabwean Christian and Muslim women. In the light of the newly introduced Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act, it was also necessary to investigate the abused women's perceptions and possible utilisation of the Act. While several studies have focused on the abuse of religious women and their responses to such, there is an almost complete lack of information pertaining to Zimbabwean Christian and Muslim women's experiences of domestic violence and the utility of the law under such circumstances.

While a majority of the studies in this review focused on domestic violence among Christian women, the bulk of these emanated from the West, especially Canada (for example, Nason-Clark and colleagues 1997, 1999, 2004, 2009; Schlueter 1996) and the United States (for example, Blake 2011; Knickmeyer 2004; Knickmeyer et al 2003; Manetta et al 2003; Horne & Levitt 2003; Levitt & Ware 2006a,b; Rotunda et al; Stotland 2000; Broderick 2007; Gillum 2009). This paucity of literature pertaining to the African context called for more information in this regard. In addition, of the African literature reviewed, there was very little on Zimbabwean women's experiences, hence the need for a study that covered this area. It was also noted that literature on abused Muslim women in the Zimbabwean context was almost completely absent so the study sought to make a contribution in this regard.

The bulk of the literature on empirical studies conducted in different geographical areas deals with Christianity in spite of the author's effort to balance the reviews. In Muslim societies, empirical studies on domestic violence are limited (Kulwicki et al

2010:228; Sheikh 2008:31; Abugideiri 2005:2; Hajjar 2004:8). The limited literature cries out for more investigations, hence the need for the current one.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The chapter has reviewed literature related to domestic violence and religion, specifically Christianity and Islam. Generally, more literature has come from the West, and this could imply that there is more openness on issues of domestic violence here compared to other regions. Compared to Christianity, Islam, as depicted in the quantity of the literature surveyed, seems to be a more 'introverted' culture, that is, more secretive about a very private issue such as domestic violence.

The picture that emerges from the literature survey is that domestic violence is no stranger to families of faith and that sometimes religion is used by both clergy and lay people to silence the abused. However, the literature has also shown that religion can be helpful to the abused when it condemns domestic violence and encourages victims to leave abusive situations. Thus, religion is depicted in an ambivalent light. On the one hand it encourages victims to endure the violence, accepting it as a cross to bear (in the Christian context) and even implying that victims are also to blame for not behaving well enough or not being good wives. On the other hand, religion can give people the power to seek liberation and peace. The ambivalence of religion in responding to domestic violence puts women in a double bind; they struggle to find safety and healing while at the same time seeking to preserve their religious identity which sometimes worsens their predicament.

The literature also suggests that religion sometimes colludes with culture to nurture violence against women and to prevent them from seeking legal protection. The patriarchal nature of society, sanctioned by religious texts, customs and traditions, and perpetuated through socialisation as depicted in the bulk of literature is, to a large extent, responsible for domestic violence.

The survey of literature on domestic violence involving people of faith suggests that both secular and religious resources should be utilised in order for the problem to be

addressed effectively. It submits that faith leaders and secular advocates each have unique and parallel roles in their efforts to curb domestic violence.

The forthcoming chapter will focus on research methodology wherein the methods of research for the current study will be identified, described and justified.

PART 2: THE EMPIRICAL PROCESS

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methods that were used to collect and analyse data. The study was based on the collection of empirical data in order to understand the experiences of domestic violence among religious women. It was therefore a qualitative methodological process.

The selection of participants, data collection and analysis procedures are described. Ethical considerations are critical in a study such as this because of the highly personal nature of the data. As such, these considerations are a constituent part of the chapter. The chapter also explains the validation procedures employed.

6.2 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.2.1 Personal background

Sandra Harding⁵⁴ (1987:79) writes that a researcher is a real, historical individual with concrete specific interests and desires that must be open to scrutiny. In view of this, it is pertinent that I openly express my background and beliefs that have influenced the study's direction, analysis and interpretations. Given the qualitative (phenomenological) nature of this study and the use of a feminist approach, a short description of my background is necessary in order to bring to light the lens I brought to the project.

My lived experience is shaped by my background- ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status. I would like to acknowledge my own background as a Zimbabwean Christian Shona woman. I have a Christian background but I have a pluralist attitude to religion owing to years of exposure to the study of various religions from a

⁵⁴Sandra Harding is an American philosopher of feminist epistemology. She has contributed to standpoint theory.

phenomenological perspective. It is my hope that I had adequately allowed the phenomena to speak for themselves in a typical phenomenological fashion.

I first became acquainted with feminist theology in 1991 when I was studying the course 'Issues of Contemporary Christian Thought' as an undergraduate at the University of Zimbabwe. In that course I learnt that there are multiple realities and not just one, as Gnanadason, Kanyoro and McSpadden (2006:21) assert: "none of us hold the final truth". I was particularly fascinated by feminist critiques of religion especially as articulated by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza in her book *In Memory of Her* (1983). Fiorenza describes the contribution of women to Christianity in spite of the patriarchal silence about their involvement in its history. I realised that, contrary to what I used to believe, women fully participated in the early church. The course gave me an awareness of the prejudice against women that is sanctified by religion.

The feminist perspectives that I was exposed to in that course gave me awareness that religion can be ambivalent as far as the treatment of women is concerned. I also began to understand that the socialisation process can condition an individual to uphold certain perspectives as the norm. Because of my background, I believed that the subordination and inferior status of women was God-given and could not be questioned. For this reason, at first, I studied the course with reservations about the feminist perspectives because I had been socialised to believe that anything that challenges what God has ordained, is blasphemous. However, the feminist paradigm gradually became more acceptable each time that I interacted with feminist theology either through lectures or through feminist readings. I began to understand that the feminist paradigm is a force to be reckoned with; a legitimate way of looking at social phenomena. I should, however, hasten to point out that I was, and still am, not quite comfortable with radical feminism which advocates throwing away the Bible and institutional religion as male resources and tools of oppression. Instead, I accept the conviction of feminists such as Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Letty Russell, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Isabel Apawo Phiri, Musa Dube and Mercy Amba Oduyoye who assert that the Bible is a feminist resource and heritage.

A feminist study of the Bible opened my eyes to the interface between religion, culture and violence, especially violence against women and girl children. The Bible,

and indeed religion in general, has been used either to condone or to propel violence against women.

My research interests revolve around studies of women and religion. The dissertation for my first degree was on Christian women's ceremonial religious leadership. At Masters Level, my dissertation was on Muslim women's experiences in Muslim society. Now at Doctoral level, it seemed expedient to me to pursue studies of women and religion, this time studying the experiences of both Christian and Muslim women who were exposed to domestic violence.

When the Domestic Violence Act (Zimbabwe) was passed as an Act of Parliament in 2006, I felt challenged to explore the pragmatic utility of such a benevolent act to abused religious women, considering that women are generally more vulnerable to abuse than men and that religion has a bearing on the abused's response to abuse.

Before embarking on this thesis, I conducted a study, in collaboration with colleagues, to explore Zimbabwean Christian women's perceptions of the Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act. The article which resulted from that study was published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*⁵⁵. Subsequently, I decided to pursue the subject further in this thesis; to go beyond the perceptions of one religion and to focus on the practical utility, the 'cash value', of the Act to both Christian and Muslim women who were either experiencing, or had experienced domestic violence at the hands of their spouses. I undertook to investigate the usefulness of the Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act to Christian and Muslim women because these were the two dominant world religions in Masvingo, the region of my study, which happened to be my home area as well.

6.2.2 Qualitative research

This study sought to find out Christian and Muslim women's experiences of domestic violence and their response to the abuse. Since qualitative research is based on human experience, the current study is qualitative to the extent that it is centred on the experiences of abused women. The qualitative methodology applied in this study was the phenomenological method which will be discussed in detail below. As already

⁵⁵ Makahamadze, T., Isacco, A., & Chireshe, E. 2011. Examining the perceptions of Zimbabwean women about the Domestic Violence Act. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* XX(X):1-22.

noted in Chapter 1 (1.6.2), the phenomenological qualitative research design was framed within the feminist paradigm.

All qualitative methodologies and the phenomenological method in particular, seek to understand the meaning of events from the point of view of participants involved (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:7; Lester 1999:1; Moustakas 1994:21; Moon et al 1990:358). Since the current study sought to find out abused women's subjective experiences of abuse and their response to the abuse, a qualitative methodology was found appropriate as it facilitated an open and extensive exploration of those experiences. In addition, the adoption of the qualitative design was based on Moustakas' (1994:21) recommendation that because studies of human experiences are difficult to approach through quantitative methods, they should be approached through qualitative methods. Given that qualitative research is "the interpretive study of a specified phenomenon or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made" (Parker 1994:2), interpretation of human experiences was central to this qualitative study (see also Denzin & Lincoln 2000:7). Furthermore, since qualitative research seeks to gain valid knowledge and understanding by representing and illuminating the nature and quality of people's experiences (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall 1994:142), this study sought to gain an understanding of women's experiences by encouraging the participants to speak for themselves.

Qualitative research enables the collection of comprehensive descriptions which provide a basis for analysis to establish the essence of experience (Moustakas 1994:21). In this study this was achieved through giving individual women the opportunity to tell their stories from their own point of view, without the researcher's judgements. This made it possible for the study to obtain thick descriptions from the participants. The researcher, serving as the key data collection instrument, gathered data on the experiences of the participants. It is these individual descriptions that formed the basis of interpretation.

This study empowered participants who served as co-researchers, that is, each individual participant was regarded as an expert in her own life experiences; experiences that were drawn upon to gain insight into the phenomenon of domestic violence against women of faith and the perceived usefulness of the Domestic

Violence Act under such circumstances. The women's stories, based on their own experiences, formed the basis on which themes were established.

The flexibility of qualitative research made it particularly appropriate when working with the participants because there was room to adjust the order of questions as well as the phraseology of questions as the research progressed (see Charmaz 2006:14). Given that the qualitative paradigm is based on an exploration of people's experiences and how they make sense of such experiences (Lester 1999:1; Moon et al 1990:358), the qualitative method was used for this study in order to extract an individual account from each participant by listening to stories of their experiences of domestic violence and to get detailed descriptions of their beliefs, feelings and attitudes. In order to explore how participants were responding or had responded to domestic violence, it was important to obtain 'thick' descriptions of individual experiences of these events. Emphasis was placed on the holistic nature of social behaviour. This research was motivated by the desire to understand the experiences of women facing abuse, their coping strategies and the place of the Domestic Violence Act in such experiences. The qualitative research methodology implies an inductive research strategy in which the researcher moves from the particular to the general (Lester 1999:2). It is this inductive mode that this study adopted as the aim was to make specific observations that would lead to the discovery of a pattern or essence.

6.2.2.1 The phenomenological method

Being qualitative, this research also falls under the phenomenological method which was employed in the implementation of the study. While in the first chapter (1.6.1) the phenomenological approach, providing the framework for this study, was described, in this section the phenomenological method, providing for the study tools, is described. The adoption of this method assumes a number of theoretical underpinnings about religious phenomena (Steyn 1994:14). Empirical phenomenology is based on the conviction that a scientific explanation must be grounded in the meanings attached to phenomena by research participants (Aspers 2009:7; Aspers 2004:2; Lester 1999:1; Edwards 1990:489). In a similar vein, Fouchè (2005:270) states that phenomenology "aims to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives". Thus the phenomenological method emphasises subjective meaning. The central question under the phenomenological method is: "What is the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of this

phenomenon for this person or group of people? (Best & Khan 2006:255). In keeping with the preceding conceptualisations of the phenomenological method, the current study investigated the lived experiences of women who had experienced domestic violence and how they perceived such experience. The purpose was to see domestic violence and the attendant response to it from the perspective of the abused women who participated in the study.

The phenomenological method also assumes that the social world is socially constructed. In this regard, social reality is perceived as not existing independently of human beings in social settings. The decision to use the phenomenological method, wherein individuals are the units of analysis, was guided by the phenomenological theory that the social world is constructed by its inhabitants. For example, the issue of domestic violence is perceived differently in terms of its essence, causes, effects and the intervention strategies that can be put in place to address it. This study, in observance of empirical phenomenology, investigated domestic violence as it was experienced by specific individuals because, as Aspens (2004:5) states, “If we are to understand the social world and meet the demands of phenomenology, we must produce explanations that are grounded in the subjective experiences of real people.”

As the phenomenological method places emphasis on first person reports of life experiences (Fouchè 2005:270; Edwards 1990:489), semi-structured in-depth interviews were employed for this study. The participants’ life worlds were entered through contacting them personally and conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews which involved listening to their stories. As Charmaz (2006:15) observes, interpretive qualitative methods suggest that the researcher has to enter into the research participants’ world. Following this line of thought, this study considered the participants’ subjective perspective as the basis of the analysis. Thus the quest for meaning took into consideration the perspectives of the participants, including what their experiences meant to them, taking cognisance of the subjective nature of meaning.

Focus groups, as a means of collecting qualitative data, were also considered with a view to using them alongside interviews. However, because of the sensitive nature of the topic, the idea was dropped and only in-depth, semi-structured interviews were used. The decision to drop the idea of focus group discussions was informed by

Greef's (2005:302) recommendation that focus groups should be avoided if sensitive information is to be shared because this undermines confidentiality.

In this study the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of the participants were captured without making any value judgements. The aim was to accurately describe the phenomenon of domestic violence from the perspective of abused women without necessarily subscribing to their beliefs about the phenomenon. This sympathetic interpolation, whereby the researcher would enter into the world of the participants (Young 2002:31), assisted in the understanding of the phenomenon of domestic violence as it was experienced by Zimbabwean Shona women belonging to Christianity and Islam. The study did not evaluate the truth or otherwise of what participants held to be true but sought to describe as clearly as possible, the unique experiences of individual participants to establish the meanings that the individuals attached to those experiences. As such, the goal was to understand the participants from within their own frames of reference. In arriving at this decision, I was particularly influenced by Steyn (1994:15) who conducted a study in the phenomenology of religion in which she strived to "describe all relevant perspectives from within, and refrain from judgements and evaluations of truth claims". Since the phenomenological method deals with subjective reality, in-depth interviews were conducted in ways that encouraged participants to freely air their opinions on the subject of domestic violence, its intersection with religion and the utilisation of the Domestic Violence Act of Zimbabwe. The interview situation was approached with an open mind, considering every statement as having equal worth, as Moustakas (1994:21) advises.

Considering that the researcher is a necessary part of what is being studied (Schutt & Chambliss 2006:167; Charmaz 2006:15; Crabtree & Miller 1999:82; Lester 1999:1) and that it is not possible to entirely suspend preconceptions (Steyn 1994:16), such prejudices were brought to light to create an atmosphere of trust between the phenomenological researcher and the participants.

6.3 HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

The history of this project was shaped by its qualitative nature which allowed for flexibility. Since the research design was flexible, it gave room for adjustments during the course of the study. Although the aim of the study was not to generate theory, a number of conclusions, some of which are pointers to specific areas of future research, were generated. The study project involved a number of stages.

6.3.1 Unit of analysis

As in all social science research endeavours, the object of research need to be defined (Baxter & Jack 2008:545). This is the unit of analysis, the unit about which data are collected (Babie 2004:189). Units of analysis can be social groups or individuals. In this research, the units of analysis were Christian and Muslim women of Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe, who had experienced domestic violence or spousal abuse. The women in this study were recruited because they shared the same phenomenon of experiencing some form of domestic violence and they were all religious. The study aimed to investigate the extent to which the abused women took advantage of the Domestic Violence Act (Zimbabwe 2006). Details on the unit of analysis are presented in Section 6.3.3 below.

6.3.2 Literature survey

After defining the object of research, the next stage involved consulting literature on domestic violence in religious communities. It also included the search for literature on the role of women in African Religion and culture, Christianity, and Islam, which provided good background information on violence against women. The works of researchers on various areas related to the study were consulted. These include the works, both print and electronic, of scholars and researchers such as James L. Cox, Nancy Nason-Clark, Marie M. Fortune, Nicole Knickmeyer, Heidi M. Levitt, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Isabel Apawo Phiri, Asghar Ali Engineer, Fatima Mernissi, Aziza al-Hibri, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, and Amina Wadud, among others. From these sources, a set of major topics for investigation was gleaned. The different articles and books provided insight into domestic violence in social and religious contexts and how best such a study could be

undertaken. Although I had intended to get comparable amounts of literature on domestic violence and religion from both Christian and Muslim contexts, it turned out that the bulk of the studies on the interface between domestic violence and religion, including the pastoral response, had been done on the Christian community.

The results of the literature survey were discussed at length in Chapter 5 although reference to the sources consulted was made throughout the chapters.

6.3.3 Selecting participants

After the literature search the next stage involved selecting participants for the interviews. Strydom and Delport (2005:328) point out that the researcher should critically think about the parameters of the population before a sample is chosen. Following this advice, I set the following parameters:

- Participants were to be Zimbabwean, Black, and belonging to the Shona ethnic group, who identified themselves as victims of domestic violence;
- Participants should be females, married or recently divorced or separated (less than twelve months ago). Thus they must presently be in a violent relationship or must have been in one less than a year ago. These were likely to provide useful insights into the relationship between domestic violence, religion and the use of the law by abused religious women;
- They could be any age above 18 since 18 years is the legal age of majority, the legal age at which a child becomes an adult and is legally capable of consenting to participate in the study;
- They should be Christians or Muslims;
- They must reside in and around Masvingo, Zimbabwe, being within a radius of 30km of Masvingo city.

Since relatively small numbers are adequate for qualitative research that employs in-depth interviews (Whittaker 2009:34; Levitt et al 2008:446; Sowell 2001:46), I set out to select 30 participants, 15 Christian and 15 Muslim women, in Masvingo urban and

peri-urban areas, who had experienced domestic violence at the hands of their intimate partners. The intention was to come up with a comparable number of participants from the two religions under investigation.

Given that a successful research endeavour involves choosing prospective participants who have the right information for the study (Neuman 2006:222; McBurney 2001:246), a blend of purposive sampling and snowball sampling was adopted in the selection of participants for this study. In snowball sampling, “Researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2001:104). These individuals identify, to the researcher, other prospective participants, and these, in turn, identify yet others. Thus in applying this technique the researcher uses a few subjects to identify prospective participants who have the characteristics of interest. Both purposive and snowball sampling were found appropriate for this study because it was not possible to list all Christian and Muslim women in the area under investigation, who had experienced domestic violence. According to Cohen et al (2001:104) and Berg (2004:36), snowball sampling is appropriate where identification of participants is difficult or when the subject under investigation is sensitive. Since the subject of domestic violence is a sensitive issue (Rzepka 2002:1), I decided to use snowballing alongside purposeful sampling.

To identify people with the right information, I sought the assistance of the leaders of religious women’s organisations, my relatives and friends as well as my university students. I asked them if they knew of anyone who was being abused, explaining to them the purpose of the study. It was also necessary to explain the voluntary nature of the participation to those who assisted with the identification of abused women. I then asked the identified prospective participants to assist me to identify others whom they knew were in a similar situation, thus applying snowball sampling.

Because only those who were willing to participate were involved in the study, the sample for this study was a convenient one (see Sowell 2001:46). Some of the students I had asked to assist in the identification of people with the information required for the study volunteered to be participants because they were either victims of abuse or had just survived the abuse. For those who volunteered to participate, it appeared to be a great relief to have someone to talk to.

In the final analysis, the selection of participants was done with the assistance of the following categories of helpers: leaders of women's religious organisations, my relatives and friends, my students, and some of the identified prospective participants.

As I was in the process of selecting participants, it became clear that it was not possible to get an equal number of Christian and Muslim women as planned. Christian women were easier to contact through their religious organisations, to which I had easy access, my relatives and friends as well as my university students. Most of those contacted agreed to be interviewed. The process was, however, not as easy in the case of Muslim women. Five of the prospective Muslim participants declined to take part in the study, their reason being that they were not victims of domestic violence as their relatives (who had assisted with their identification) had indicated. This was in spite of the fact that their relatives, through whom I had come to know about them, had explained to them the purpose of this study and that they (prospective participants) had initially indicated, to their relatives, that they would work with me.

Even if all the prospective Muslim participants had showed willingness to take part in the study, there still would have been no balance in numbers as there would be 13 Muslims (including the five who declined to participate). It appears that the relatively small number of Muslims in Masvingo partly explains why it was not easy to secure an equal number of Christians and Muslims for the sample.

When I failed to secure the required number of Muslim participants, I settled for 22 Christians and 8 Muslims since I had decided to involve 30 participants in all (see Appendix B). The final ratio was thus determined by the availability of participants from the two religions rather than comparability of numbers. The women came from different churches in the case of Christianity but all the Muslim women who consented to participate were from the Sunni branch of Islam. It was a coincidence and not planned that all Muslim women turned out to be Sunni.

Given that the question of gaining entry into the participants' private lives might be a great challenge, I presented a letter from the university (Appendix E) which testified that I was a *bona fide* doctoral student doing an academic study with no intention whatsoever of exposing the participants' details. To some participants, the production of the letter was not necessary as they deemed my explanation sufficient.

I disclosed, to the participants, all information regarding the aims of the study and the methodology. The participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any point, if they so wished. Since getting the informed consent of participants is an ethical necessity (Savin-Baden & Major 2010:21; McQueen & Knussen 1999:232), I ensured that prospective participants gave their informed consent before participating in the study.

All the prospective participants who had agreed to take part in the study were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix D) to indicate their willingness to take part in the interviews. Nine of the participants (5 Christian and 4 Muslim) said that their verbal consent was sufficient and I respected their stance. These did not sign the consent form. Notwithstanding their unwillingness to sign consent forms, the participants concerned voluntarily participated in this study and this is in keeping with research ethics (discussed under Section 6.5). As such, all the participants in this study gave either their verbal or written consent.

Arrangements pertaining to the date, time and venue for each interview were made in consultation with the individual participants. This was necessary in order to avoid inconveniencing the participants. The aim was to make the participants feel as comfortable as possible.

6.3.4 The in-depth semi-structured interview

After selecting the participants the next stage was to conduct interviews with the participants. Because in-depth semi-structured interviews are an effective means of gathering data on people's experiences (Aspers 2009:8; Denzin & Lincoln 2000:7; Moustakas 1994:21), they were used to collect qualitative data on women's experiences and perceptions of domestic violence. The interviews thus permitted participants space to share their experiences.

Interviews were conducted at different venues that included the participants' homes (14), the researcher's home (8), the researcher's office at work (with students) (5) and the Civic Centre Gardens in Masvingo City Centre, Zimbabwe (3).

The interview questions were directed by the interview guide (Appendix A) although flexibility was allowed. Sometimes questions were not asked exactly in the same

manner and order. The interview guide consisted of 7 main themes that later on guided data analysis. Thus the semi-structured interviews used were based on some predetermined questions but there was some flexibility in how the questions were asked. The semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewees an opportunity to shape the flow of the information (see Aspens 2009:7; Wilkinson & Birmingham 2003:45). The interviews consisted of open-ended questions. As open-ended questions encourage unanticipated statements and stories to emerge (Charmaz 2006:26), they made the collection of thick descriptions possible in this study. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were advantageous in that they allowed comparability of results and at the same time allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth descriptions (see Best & Khan 2006:268). Such questions helped to define the area of interest to the researcher and at the same time permitted the participant to move in any direction she wanted. In this way, the participant's subjective experience was laid bare, thus aiding the researcher's understanding of the experience. Questions such as "Tell me in as much detail as possible about your experiences of domestic violence" (Appendix A, Question 4) were quite useful in soliciting rich descriptions of personal experiences from participants.

Twenty-seven of the 30 interviews were audio tape recorded. The interviews were recorded to allow for a more complete record and to ensure every detail was captured. Although I had planned to record all 30 interviews, this was not to be as three participants indicated that they were not comfortable having their voices recorded. In these cases, I had to resort to writing notes as the interviews progressed. Although it is not possible to capture every detail in writing, I captured the main issues that were later to be analysed to form part of this research report.

At the start of each interview I restated the purpose of the study, although I had done it at the stage of selecting participants (6.3.3), to allow the participants to fully understand the research in which they were participating.

The narrative approach, where people tell their stories within the context of interviews, is especially applicable for sensitive topics (Durham 2003a:33). Since this study focused on a sensitive topic, the narrative approach fitted well within the data collection aspect of this study. In the process of interviewing, participants told their stories and these narratives contained valuable information for the study (see

Whittaker 2009:15). In keeping with Wilkinson and Birmingham's (2003:44) assertion that in-depth semi-structured interviews are insightful, the participants' narratives gave the researcher insights into the worldview of participants.

The interviews created a listening and talking space where meaning was co-constructed. Conventional approaches to interviewing regard respondents as "passive vessels of answers for experiential questions" (Holstein & Gubrium 1995:8). However, if one perceives the interviewee as a participant, an expert informant of her own experience, the interview becomes a dynamic, meaning-making occasion, that enriches both the interviewer and the interviewee. Taking cognisance of the fact that the participants were experts in their own experiences, I allowed each participant to air their views, in an atmosphere that was conversational. I gave them space to lead discussion to areas they felt were of importance but keeping in mind that I needed certain information to address my research questions.

As the interviews progressed, I ensured effective communication by restating or rephrasing the interviewee's responses. Restatement can clarify what has been said as well as stimulate the interviewee to say more (Wilkinson & Birmingham 2003:53).

6.3.5 Analysis of interview data

After collecting data, the next step was analysis of the data. It is the analysis and discussion of data that makes the study a worthwhile activity. Through data analysis, information collected was given some order and meaning.

Qualitative data analysis begins at the data collection stage (Schutt & Chambliss 2006:194). It is important to listen, transcribe and review the transcriptions several times as De Vos (2005:337) advises. After each interview, I listened to the audio recorded interview and then transcribed it onto sheets of paper which were coded. Where interviews were not tape recorded the notes written during the interviews served as the transcripts.

Thematic content analysis was adopted. It is a method appropriate for analysing qualitative data. After completing all 30 interviews, the transcribed data were analysed, using tables to summarise all the information on each of the different issues that formed the focus of the interviews. For each table there were appropriate columns

to show which of the 30 participants had presented particular responses. Given that qualitative data tends to be inductive (Schutt & Chambliss 2006:194; McQueen & Knussen 1999:222), it was necessary to identify important categories in the data. In this study information from participants was placed into categories. Data were analysed in terms of the following main themes: the place of women in their religion(s), participants' reports on the reasons for the emergence of violence, participants' responses to the violence, including the extent to which they utilised the law, particularly the Domestic Violence Act, and the advice the participants would give to other abused women. At this stage, which De Vos (2005:335) refers to as 'the heart of qualitative data analysis', correlations between the different stories of participants were identified. Content analysis of the responses involved coding them into main themes. The analysis also incorporated my own perceptions and understanding.

The findings were based on the tabulated data, transcripts and audio-recorded statements. It was necessary for me to constantly revert to audio-tapes to capture word for word information supplied by individual participants.

6.3.6 Validation

As it is necessary for researchers to demonstrate the credibility of their studies (Patton 2001:14), this study underwent validation. Validation of results was the last stage in the research process.

Validity in qualitative research is associated with the notions of credibility and trustworthiness (Golafshani 2003:60; Holstein & Gubrium 1995:9). Since validation of results should involve the participants of the study (Crabtree & Miller 1999:83; Creswell 1998:196; Steyn 1994:16), participants in this study validated the findings, that is, they confirmed whether the researcher had accurately described their experiences, opinions, attitudes and beliefs. The self-understanding of participants was taken into consideration. It was necessary to find out from the participants whether the information supplied by them had been captured accurately. Four of the participants were asked to read the results chapter (Chapter 7) to determine whether their experiences were reflected. All four indicated that they recognised their

experiences and were satisfied that it had been accurately described. In this regard, they endorsed the results.

The validity of the results of qualitative research is also enhanced by an honest account of the researcher's interaction with participants in the field, problems encountered, and attempts made to solve the problem (Schutt & Chambliss 2006:207). In light of this, I have attempted to validate my findings by describing my field experiences (Section 6.4).

Listening to tape recorders several times also enhanced reliability of the findings. It ensured that information was correctly captured. Since what is recorded on tape is primary data from participants, I listened to audio tapes a number of times. I constantly referred to verbatim accounts as contained on the audio tapes because in a number of cases I had to cite quotations that epitomised certain viewpoints.

6.4 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE FIELDWORK AND INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted between September and December 2011.

In narrating their experiences, participants at times digressed. I realised that at times I had to allow them to go into aspects that did not concern the study because these were important to them. However, in spite of this digression, I ensured that I covered all the issues at stake during the interviews.

All participants revealed a cooperative attitude and showed that they were at ease during the interview process. Perhaps the easiness owed to the fact that I was one of their kind (a woman) interviewing them. Rapport with participants deepened when they asked me questions pertaining to my own experiences and perceptions. I tried to be as open as possible to them. One participant (P1) remarked that I was carrying out an interesting study that she would be willing to duplicate. As a university student in her final year in which the research project was a compulsory course, she indicated that she had been challenged to conduct a similar study in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts Degree Programme she was pursuing.

To most participants, this study showed concern for abused women. Although I did not provide any practical solution to the problems participants faced, I indicated to

them institutions that they could consult for help. From my experience with the abused women, it was clear that some saw me as some kind of ‘messianic figure’ to give them relief. One participant (P6) indicated that my conversation with her was a great relief. At least she had found someone with whom to share her nasty experiences. She was one of those whom I had asked to assist me with identifying abused women who could participate in the study. Instead of promising me this kind of assistance, she presented herself as an interviewee. Hers was one of the longest interviews since it was an occasion for her to pour out her heart.

Given the challenge that I had with securing Muslim participants, I was not so sure whether I would secure their cooperation during the interviews. To my surprise (though this is what I wanted) I found that they were as open as their Christian counterparts. The plea, “Please make sure that our talk is a secret” or something to this effect was a recurrent request among Muslim participants.

There were times when I felt like bursting with anger against perpetrators of violence as the women narrated their ordeal but I had to remind myself that although I had to empathise with participants, I had to also keep my distance as a researcher. Throughout the interview process there was a temptation to assume the role of counsellor but I strived to maintain my posture as a researcher.

At the end of each interview I thanked the participant for her time and involvement. This was appropriate because the in-depth interviews were time consuming.

I found the interaction with participants during the interviews very enriching.

6.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since research in the social sciences requires the consideration of ethical issues (Mudaly & Goddard 2006:67; Mouton 2001:238), ethical guidelines were followed as an integral part of the planning and implementation process of this study. The main purpose of considering research ethics was to protect the welfare and dignity of the participants. Since the study investigated the experiences of domestic violence which is a sensitive issue, ethical issues such as protection from harm, privacy, confidentiality, honesty, anonymity, and beneficence were observed. Care was taken to ensure that participants were protected from any form of harm. However, while it is

not possible to completely avoid every possible form of harm, direct harm to participants can be avoided (Schutt & Chambliss 2006:186). I tried to avoid harming participants by, for example, respecting their opinions and avoiding blaming the participants for the violence as well as maintaining confidentiality and privacy in the interview process.

I assured participants of the confidentiality of their disclosures. Privacy was ensured by conducting interviews at places that were relatively private, that prevented anyone from hearing the conversations. Interviews were held at participants' homes, at my home, in my work office, and in a park in the city centre of Masvingo. Effort was made to ensure the spouses of participants were kept as far away from the interviews as possible. Where the interview was conducted at the home of the participant, the participant ensured that her spouse was absent.

As respect is an ethical consideration of significance (Mouton 2001:243), in this study I respected participants by not undermining their beliefs and perceptions. I ensured that no participant was degraded or humiliated as a result of taking part in this study. Throughout the interview, I kept in mind the sensitive nature of the subject to avoid harming the participants emotionally.

In writing up the results of the interviews, I ensured anonymity by allocating numbers to represent participants. I tried as much as possible to eliminate anything that could lead to the identification of participants.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the methods that were used to collect and to analyse data. It provided a history of the project that highlighted the planning, execution, necessary changes during the research process, and lastly the validation of the findings. The researcher's experience of the interviews and the ethical considerations were also discussed.

The next chapter analyses and discusses the findings of the research process.

CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents, analyses and discusses the major themes that came from the thirty participants' interviews and how these themes relate to the literature. The primary goal of the study was to find out where the abused women turned for help as well as the extent to which they made use of the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act of Zimbabwe (2006).

Data was analysed using an interpretive approach. Interviews were transcribed, interpreted and then categorised according to themes. Data analysis was done through recurrent and emergent themes. Recurrent themes were generated from ideas expressed in many of the women's stories. Emergent themes were unique perspectives.

The data was obtained from participants who were purposefully chosen among Christian and Muslim women in and around urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe. The women selected for the study were, or had been, in abusive partner relationships. In the analysis of data the research uses numbers as codes to represent participants, with numbers 1-22 being used to identify Christian women and numbers 23-30 identifying Muslim women. Throughout the presentation, reference to individual participants will be made in terms of participant number to preserve anonymity. Although, I intended to involve more Muslim women, only a few participated because most allegedly abused Muslim women were not willing to take part in the study. Furthermore, there were generally fewer Muslim women identified compared to Christian women because there were fewer Muslims than Christians in the area under investigation. The contents of the interview schedule (Appendix A) guided the discussion of findings.

7.2 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants were requested to provide personal details, presented in Appendix B. The rationale behind the request for personal details was that every woman who experiences domestic violence is the product of many factors including her age, education, religious background, and employment status (Carlson 1991:473).

The participants were aged between 21 and 52. All were adults according to the Legal Age of Majority Act of Zimbabwe (1982) which stipulates that anyone becomes an adult upon attaining 18 years. As such, consent to participate was made by the participants themselves. They were generally younger than their male spouses. Their partners' ages ranged from 25 to 53.

Religious affiliation plays a role in defining one's conceptualisation of and response to violence (Wendt 2008:144), hence the need to explore this aspect. In terms of religious affiliation, the 22 Christian participants belonged to various denominations within both the mainline and African Initiated Churches (AICs) (see Table 1 below).

Affiliation of participants	
Christian	22
Roman Catholic	5
Reformed Church in Zimbabwe	4
United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe	2
Baptist Convention	1
Seventh Day Adventist Church	1
Zviratidzo Zvavapostori	2
Johanne Masowe weChishanu	2
Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange	1
Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA)	2
Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFMZ)	1
Covenant Faith Ministries	1
Muslim	8
Sunni Muslim	8
Total	30

Table 1

Of those who belonged to mainline churches, five were members of the Roman Catholic Church, four were members of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, two were members of the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, one belonged to the Baptist Convention and one belonged to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Those who belonged to African Initiated Churches were subdivided into Zionist/Apostolic

Churches and Evangelical/Pentecostal churches. Of the Zionist/Apostolic churches, two belonged to Zviratidzo Zvavapostori, two belonged to Johanne Masowe weChishanu and one belonged to the Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange. Of the members of the Evangelical/Pentecostal Churches two belonged to the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA), one belonged to the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFMZ) and one belonged to the Covenant Faith Ministries. All the eight Muslim participants indicated that they belonged to the Sunni branch of Islam.

All the 30 women were Shona speaking, African women who had experienced violence in intimate relationships, perpetrated by their spouses. Almost all participants (28/30 or 93%) had children ranging in number from one to six, with three being the average number of children. Two participants did not have children.

Table 2 below presents participants' levels of education.

Educational levels of participants	
Grade 7	3
Failed O Levels	11
O Levels	5
A levels	1
Tertiary Education	10
Total	30

Table 2

All participants had at least some primary education. A substantial number (16) had reached O Level⁵⁶ but of these 11 had not obtained the requisite five subjects including Mathematics and English that would make them eligible for admission into professional training programmes. Ten participants had tertiary education qualifications (1-Masters Degree; 4-Bachelors' Degree; 4-Diploma in Education; 1-Diploma in Secretarial Studies). Three participants had reached Grade 7 which is the

⁵⁶O Level is Ordinary Level which, in Zimbabwe, is the minimum level after which one can pursue a professional qualification. O Level is the equivalent of Grade 11 according to some systems of education. A Level is the highest level attainable at high school and is a prerequisite for enrolment into a degree programme in most cases. These levels are equivalent to those in the United Kingdom.

highest level attainable at primary level but the lowest level on the whole profile of the participants.

In terms of employment, almost half of the participants were unemployed. This was probably because of the limited educational levels of the participants. A substantial number of participants had reached O Level although a majority in this category were unemployed. All the partners of participants in the study were employed and this might suggest that their economic power had some bearing on the violence they perpetrated against their wives.

Generally, compared to their male counterparts, participants were less educated. Assuming that there is a positive correlation between one's level of education and one's earnings, it can be concluded that even those with professional training who were employed earned less than their spouses. This scenario could lay a fertile ground for the abuse of women.

7.2.1 Childhood experiences of domestic violence

Of the respondents, three or 10% grew up as total orphans with both parents having died while four (13.3%) were half orphans, having lost one of their parents. Of the half orphans, two had lost their mothers and two had lost their fathers. Of the seven orphans (full and half), full orphans reported a more troubled childhood, with limited care under the guardianship of relatives, mostly aunts⁵⁷. As a result, those who grew up as full orphans had limited educational attainment and so could not secure remunerative employment.

In terms of violence, a substantial number of participants had experienced or witnessed domestic violence in their families. Of the 30 women investigated, slightly over half (18/30 or 60 %) indicated that they witnessed physical violence perpetrated by their parents or guardians, which included the beating of their mothers by their fathers or beating of their aunts by their uncles. During certain times, they themselves were also victims of verbal and physical abuse. Some participants (7/30 or 23.3%) indicated that they believed, at a childhood stage, that domestic violence involving spouses was normal. This is because they saw their parents and guardians quickly

⁵⁷An aunt could be one's father's sister or mother's sister. In Shona there are distinct terms for these. *Vatete* or *tete* refers to one's father's sister and *mainini* (mother's young sister or niece) or *maiguru* (mother's elder sister).

returning to business as usual after the violence. Also, they would hear from members of the extended family and even from members of religious communities that wife-beating was normal and thus could not be the basis of divorce. Participants who indicated that they witnessed domestic violence as they were growing up also noted that blaming the violence on the victim was common, with relatives often advising battered women to find out what they had done to cause the battering so that they could amend their ways and so prevent further battering.

The childhood experiences of the participants might have a bearing on their responses to domestic violence. Those who had grown up in abusive situations were likely to be more accepting and tolerant of domestic violence than those who had grown up in relatively peaceful environments. The participants who had witnessed and experienced violence in their lives had mixed feelings, with some perceiving it as normal while others perceived it as unacceptable. Forty per cent or 12/30 respondents indicated that they did not remember experiences of violence in their childhood. According to them, they were beaten or punished for wrongdoing but they did not regard this as violence. On the contrary, they perceived it as discipline.

7.2.2 The importance of religion in the participants' lives

All participants from the two religious traditions expressed the centrality of religion in their lives. It emerged that religious affiliation, for the participants, was established at childhood in their families. This is consistent with Addai's (2000:333) assertion that religious affiliation is usually established by the family and, in most cases, it remains unchanged. Two Muslim participants (P25 & P30) had Christian (Catholic) backgrounds. They converted to Islam when they married Muslims.

Most participants recalled accounts of how their parents, especially their mothers, encouraged them to join religious groupings for the young where children were taught about their religions as a way of shaping their lives and moulding them into good citizens. Most participants indicated that, although at a tender age they did not understand the meaning of religion and religious participation, they appreciated the significance of religion in their lives when they became of age. Although most of the participants were introduced to religion early, six, or 20%, of them joined religious circles at a later stage in their lives.

All participants linked religion with social support. The study revealed that religious communities assist members in both times of joy and sorrow, thus serving as caring communities. In an urban environment where people are uprooted from their blood relatives who are mostly in rural areas or scattered elsewhere, the religious communities serve as alternative bases of social unity and security. Participants indicated that they did not only come together with other religious people for worship, but also for social functions.

Most participants explained how religion had shaped their lives and given meaning to their experiences. One of the themes that emerged with regard to religion was that it provided a framework for life, helping people to be patient and offering encouragement in times of hardship. Generally, participants indicated that religiosity made them endure hardships, living in the hope that God would intervene. One participant (P7) said, “Most sermons teach people not to run away from problems but to face them. When you encounter a problem, look up to God who can help you to overcome and get solace”. The Christian participants believed that religion was a solution to life problems and that Biblical verses were central in comforting people in the face of challenges. For Muslim participants, following the teachings of Islam in a sincere manner was a sure way of ensuring peace in the world. Both Christian and Muslim participants felt that the Almighty wanted people to live in peace while the Devil or Satan (the personification of evil) was bent on causing commotion in the world. The importance of religion, for the participants, could not be overestimated as the women generally saw no meaningful life outside the religious realm. While the centrality of religion was thus acknowledged, some participants (8/30 or 27%) indicated that the secular world can also offer solutions to life problems. These participants thus advocated a synchronisation of religious and secular solutions. As one woman (P14) put it:

Christianity is very important in molding people and giving comfort in the face of problems but agencies outside this can also be equally important and thus need to be considered.

7.2.3 The place of women in religion

This section is not meant to duplicate the chapters on the status and role of women in religion (that is in Christianity, see Chapter 3, and in Islam, see Chapter 4) but seeks

to bring to light the participants' perceptions and experiences of their place within their religious contexts. While Chapters 3 and 4 focused on the literature relevant to the discussion, the current section deals with the results of the empirical study, analysing and discussing results in light of the literature.

In order to understand the role of women in religion, one needs to understand their position both in the church and society (Suda 1996:74). The forthcoming sections (7.2.3.1 and 7.2.3.2) are grounded in the realisation of this.

7.2.3.1 The place of women in Christianity

The answer to the question on the place of women in Christianity is not straightforward given that there are different forms of Christianity all purporting to serve Christ. The discussion is centred on the information supplied by participants pertaining to their churches. As such this section does not claim to give a total picture of Christianity in Masvingo since it deals with a limited number of churches, that is, those that had representation in the sample of participants. Acknowledging that this is a limitation, I would like to explain that it was necessary to get acquainted with the religious experiences of the participants in order to understand the influence of religion on their response to domestic violence. An examination of many different churches would not suffice for a study of this nature. It is worth noting that because the participants were selected on the basis of their willingness to take part in the study, it was not possible to ensure a more diverse representation of the churches.

The place of women in Christianity is discussed under four headings, namely religious leadership, marriage and divorce, education and employment, property rights and domestic violence.

Religious leadership

Mainline churches

There were diverse responses in terms of women's religious leadership in Christianity. However, the study revealed that churches were becoming more egalitarian in terms of accepting women's religious leadership including ordination. While at their implantation missionary churches or mainline churches were opposed to the idea of female priesthood, they were increasingly opening their doors to the ordination of women, as revealed by this study. The mainline churches that were

represented in this study were the Roman Catholic Church (hereafter RCC), the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (hereafter RCZ), the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (hereafter UMCZ), the Baptist Convention (hereafter BC) and the Seventh Day Adventist Church (hereafter SDA).

Participants who belonged to the Roman Catholic Church indicated that ordination of women to priesthood was not Catholic. This was the sphere of man. However, women could take on leadership roles at parish level as chairpersons, treasurers or committee members. In terms of justification for barring women from the clergy, the participants said the tradition had to do with the maleness of Jesus who was being represented by his priests. One of the participants (P4) said that it was not natural for women to serve as priests but to support the activities of the priest. On whether the women were comfortable with this exclusion from priesthood, three participants said that there was no problem as long as they were recognised as God's children who could take part in some important church activities such as reading the scriptures. Two of the participants felt that the treatment of women in their church was unfair. They noted that since it was preached that all people were equal before God there was no good reason why they should not be priests. They hoped that one day the Church would revisit its position. One of the women (P12) said that there were women who were talented in preaching but they did not have the opportunity to exercise this and this was unfortunate. She felt that the Church remained too conservative in terms of regarding priesthood as the domain of males.

Participants who belonged to the RCZ, UMCZ and BC indicated that in their churches there was gender equality in terms of religious leadership. There was no leadership role reserved for only males. Both men and women could serve God on an equal footing. This was testified to by the ordination of women in these churches. A participant from the BC (P21) said that their church believed in the priesthood of all people. All participants from the churches under consideration (RCZ, UMCZ & BC) stated that currently there were some female ministers of religion in their churches. However, they were quick to note that gender equality in terms of equal representation in the church hierarchy was yet to be fully realised. This is understandable because the inclusion of women into ministerial positions is a recent development that is yet to grow. While the churches under consideration here tended to 'take heed to calls for gender equity' most women in these churches, as respondents

testified, were not willing to take up leadership posts, feeling that men were more suited to the responsibility than them. The following statement by one of the respondents epitomises women's unwillingness to take up leadership in the church:

I accept that all people are equal before God but I strongly feel that men are more suited for religious leadership especially serving as ministers because this involves a lot of travelling which is not suitable for women. I personally would not feel good about being a minister of religion (P6).

Findings suggest that sex-role stereotypes continue to bar women from ordination, making them (women) shun ministerial positions of responsibility. It would seem that socialisation influences perceptions of leadership. For a woman who has internalised that leadership is the domain of males, it is difficult to take up the challenge of leading people in both religious and secular contexts.

The sole participant from the SDA (P13) indicated that her church in principle allowed for the ordination of women but the reality on the ground was that there were no female pastors she knew of in Zimbabwe. In her explanation for the absence of ordained women she noted that culture had a strong hold on the people. It appears the traditional belief that males are the natural leaders impeded the ordination of women despite the fact that church policy was supportive of their ordination.

Evangelical/Pentecostal churches

All four participants from this group of churches indicated that men and women were equal in terms of their qualification to be religious leaders. They could serve at various levels of leadership, as pastors, overseers, and elders. One participant (P18) cited Galatians 3:28 to explain why her church treated males and females as equal when it comes to serving God. The verse states that all those who are baptised in Christ form a community of equals where one's sex does not matter. Participants gave a number of examples of female pastors and overseers in Masvingo Province and beyond, to illustrate that their churches pursued and implemented a policy of equality of the sexes. Results suggest that, compared to women from mainline churches, women from Evangelical/Pentecostal churches tended to be more accepting of ordination. Participants' responses suggested that generally Evangelical/Pentecostal churches had more women in ministerial positions compared to mainline churches.

Zionist/Apostolic churches

The study revealed that the churches represented under this category generally upheld patriarchal ideals. Although women could be prophets, and indeed there were quite a number of these in the churches under consideration, church leadership was generally perceived as the domain of males. However, a member of Zviratidzo Zvavapostori (P19) said women could be leaders at local churches but the overall leadership of the church was in the hands of men. The archbishop and bishops were male.

In the Johanne Masowe Apostolic Church, as in the other Zionist/Apostolic Churches, women could be ministers of religion if they were prophets. In their prophetic role, women served as spiritual healers who could prescribe spiritual medication (*miteuro*). However, as one participant (P8) noted, the church's morality prohibited a menstruating woman from laying hands on people (a healing gesture- *kuyeresa* in Shona). Menstruation was considered as defilement hence the prohibition in question.

In conclusion, what can be noted about the role of women in Masvingo churches in terms of leadership is that it was varied. As such, no level of generalisation would do justice to the churches. However, the overall picture that emerged across the churches was that the churches were embracing what secular institutions were moving towards-taking women on board in leadership roles. However, the patriarchal notion of leadership was still strong, as can be inferred from participants, especially those from mainline churches' general unwillingness to be ordained. Considering results of the current study concerning women's religious leadership, Suda's (1996:74) assertion that women are generally denied the opportunity to take part in leadership needs to be taken with caution.

Marriage and divorce

The marriage relationship, as was gathered from participants, could be monogamous (in mainline and Evangelical/Pentecostal churches as well as one of the Zionist/Apostolic churches-Johanne Masowe weChishanu) Apostolic Church or polygamous (in Zviratidzo Zvevapostori and Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange). All participants indicated that the marriage relationship was governed by the Christian teaching that the man is the head of the family. While participants did not refer to specific verses, 1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22-24, Colossians 3:18-19, and Titus 2:5, which emphasise the headship of the husband, come to mind. All the participants

believed that the man is the head of the family and to expect equality in family leadership would be to go against God's order. One participant (P8) said their church emphasised the headship of the husband who should be treated as a god. Narrating her religious leader/prophet's advice to women, she had this to say, "*Kudzai varume venyu. Murume wako ndiye mwari wokutanga* (Shona, which means, "Wives respect your husbands. Your husband is your first god"). In a similar vein, (P13) explained that at women-only gatherings they were often taught to regard their husbands as their masters. She said a woman is considered as her husband's world or territory to rule. She said, "I remember the following words from our overseer: '*Uri kanyika kake kaanotonga*'" (Shona, meaning, You are his world that he rules). These findings are consistent with Chitando's (2004:157) view that both mainline and African Initiated Churches continue to teach women to submit to their husbands and regard marriage as 'God's ministry'.

It was noted, by a majority of participants across the churches, that the husband is encouraged to love his wife and to consult her before making decisions. Three participants alluded that wifely submissiveness did not mean that the husband is a master and the wife is a servant but that the husband has the final say on family matters. The challenge could be that the husband, as head, may be tempted to make decisions unilaterally. From a feminist point of view emphasis on male dominance and female submissiveness sows seeds of domestic violence (Nkealah 2009:35; Tracy 2007:583; Rackoczy 2005:7; Rotunda et al 2004:353; Fiorenza 1995b:143).

All participants revealed that their churches discouraged divorce. They indicated that marriage should be for life because it is a union formed by God. Church leaders emphasised the need to preserve marriages and to communicate when there are problems in the marriage as well as to seek pastoral counselling. Two participants indicated that they knew of couples in their churches that had divorced in spite of the church's teaching that discourages divorce.

While communication is encouraged in marriages, one wonders if this is effective given the differential power relations between husband and wife that are sanctioned by the churches.

Education, employment and property rights

Participants across the churches indicated that Christianity supported the education of both males and females, except for one respondent from the Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange who indicated that the education of the girl child was not supported beyond primary level. The reason given for denying girls education beyond primary level was that they could be corrupted if they did so. In addition, the participant (P20) indicated that marriage, not education, was the important destination for a girl. According to this participant, the church taught that a girl should only receive an amount of education that will enable her to write a letter. She testified that her own situation was an example of the disadvantaged position of women in ACJM. She went up to Grade 7.

Four participants indicated that the establishment of educational institutions by missionaries was evidence that Christianity supported education. Missionaries established many schools in Zimbabwe.

All participants, except for a member of ACJM (P20) stated that their churches allowed them to seek employment although their main role as women was domestic maintenance. A participant from Johanne Masowe Apostolic Church (P8) said that initially her church did not allow members to seek employment but this had since changed. Thus originally the church taught that members should not work under an employer but were to employ themselves to earn a living. She referred to herself (a teacher) as evidence that her church did not prevent anyone, whether male or female, from seeking employment.

In terms of property rights, all participants save one from ACJM (P20), suggested that their churches taught that married women jointly own property with their husbands since the two married are one flesh. However, a majority (15) of the participants indicated that the reality on the ground was quite different in that their husbands did not treat them like co-owners of property as they sometimes spent their money as they wished, with minimal, if any, consultation. A member of the UMCZ (P7) said although her husband well supported her financially, she was like a dependent child with not much say on expenditure. However, for a participant from ACJM, family property belonged to the husband who is the household head. This seems to echo the

Shona traditional culture which has it that family property belongs to the husband. Even a woman's earning is considered his.

From these responses it is apparent that most participants suffered economic abuse. The dictatorship in the use of financial resources explains why women felt as they did; that they were victims of abuse.

Domestic violence

All participants stated that their churches condemned domestic violence and taught that mutual love and concern were the key building blocks of healthy marriages. While this was presented as the ideal, it also emerged that a substantial number of men were abusing their prerogative to be family heads by taking advantage of their wives, sometimes treating them as nonentities in decision-making. Although no one explicitly stated that there was a correlation between male dominance and domestic violence, participants' views suggested this. The relationship between male dominance and domestic violence against women is emphasised in the literature (see Fiorenza 1995b:141; Rotunda et al 2004:354; Phiri 2001:97).

7.2.3.2 The place of women in Islam

This section considers the place of women in Islam as perceived and experienced by the Muslim participants. The consideration focuses on a number of aspects namely, worship, education and employment, property rights and inheritance, marriage and divorce and domestic violence. It should be noted that the Muslim participants all belonged to the Sunni branch of Islam. This religious affiliation could explain why there was limited variability in terms of participants' views.

Religious leadership

All the Muslim participants indicated that males and females were obliged to carry out the same religious duties but women could not take on religious leadership and neither could they teach men. The women could only teach each other in their own circles. They indicated that it was against Islamic principles for a woman to stand before men and teach them. The reasons for prohibiting women from standing before men were cited as menstruation and temptation to sexual immorality. For all the Muslim participants, the menstruation period is regarded as a period of defilement before Allah during which a woman is not allowed to enter a mosque. One participant (P24) explained: "If a woman were to be appointed as an imam (a prayer leader), she would

have to avoid entering the mosque when she is menstruating. This would be an embarrassment as everyone would know she is menstruating”.

All Muslim participants indicated that the perception of a woman’s body as a temptation to men explains why women should not stand before men to teach them and why there are separate spaces for men and women in the mosque. Illustrating the sexually tempting nature of a woman’s body, one participant (P26) said, “If I stand before men they will not pay attention to my speech as they will be carried away by my appearance”.

Participants revealed that while prayer and fasting are obligatory for Muslims, women are exempted from these during their menstruation period. The participants explained that Allah required cleanliness from his worshippers and since menstruation is considered as a state of uncleanness, menstruating women are not allowed to come before Allah in prayer. For the majority of participants, this exclusion was justified.

While most Muslim participants did not have problems with the religious exclusion of women, taking this to be normative, two participants (P25 & P30) felt that this exclusion was not right. They felt this was unfair in the context of a religion that teaches that men and women are equal before Allah.

It can be inferred that the teachings on equality between the sexes are offset by practices that foster gender inequality.

Marriage and divorce

All participants indicated that Islam gives both men and women the right to choose their marriage partners within the Islamic religion. The participants expressed that Muslim women were not allowed to marry non-Muslims although their male counterparts could marry Christians. This is in line with the Quranic provision which allows men to marry People of the Book (Jews and Christians). Participants stated that they chose their husbands but parental involvement was central in the marriage proceedings. Moreover, Muslim men were said (by participants) to have the right to marry more than one wife whereas, for Muslim women marriage to more than one husband was unthinkable.

The participants argued that, while the man was regarded as the head of the family, mutual dependence between husband and wife was the hallmark of normative Islamic

family life. However, as some participants noted, this was not always realised because of men's tendency to dictate. All Muslim participants revealed that their husbands rarely consulted them on important family decisions.

All Muslim participants indicated that divorce was not encouraged in Islam but was allowed in situations where the marriage was no longer workable. Two of the participants revealed that they had Muslim relatives who had divorced because of constant quarrels.

Education and employment

Most Muslim participants indicated that Muslim women, according to the normative teachings of Islam, had the right to education and employment. However, they indicated that these rights were sometimes compromised as their husbands denied them the opportunity to seek employment preferring them to stay at home. It can be inferred that this control constituted economic abuse.

Property rights and inheritance

For a majority (six) of Muslim participants, Islam bestowed on women the right to own property and accumulate wealth. They cited *mahr*⁵⁸ as a source of property for the wife, who, according to normative Islam, should use the money as she desires without the interference of her husband. However, three participants indicated that they did not enjoy the right to their *mahr* as their husbands controlled the use of the *mahr*.

According to the Quran (Surah 4:7, 11), a daughter is entitled to inherit, from parents or close relatives, half the share of what her brother gets but according to all Muslim participants this was not always realised. Three participants indicated that they were aware of situations where some Muslim women were denied their right to inheritance when their fathers died. One participant (P26) revealed that, when her father died, she was not given her share of the inheritance. It appeared to her that African culture (*chiVanhu*) superseded religious teachings in the administration of the estate. This is an indicator that sometimes culture overrides religion.

⁵⁸*Mahr* is a marriage gift that the groom gives to the bride and this validates a marriage in Islam. For the participants, this gift was a token of love and in no way a form of payment for the wife. Most participants contrasted *mahr* with *lobola* which they took to be the purchase price of a woman

Domestic violence

All Muslim participants stated that Muslims were not immune to domestic violence as evidenced by their own experiences. They, however, revealed that violence, whether it was against men or against women, was condemned in Islam which was, from their perspective, a religion of peace. Therefore, the violence they were experiencing at the hands of their partners was not condoned by Islam but represented a violation of Islamic teachings which emphasise respect and human welfare. Most participants indicated that there was a misuse of both Quranic and Hadith texts by the abusers to justify the abuse.

7.3 EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This section, which constitutes the heart of this thesis, presents findings on participants' experiences of domestic violence in terms of sources/antecedents and forms of violence as well as the reaction to the violence.

The findings of this study indicate that, while physical battering was a pervasive phenomenon across the different experiences of abuse, threats of battering were also used by abusive husbands to subdue their wives. This finding is consistent with Tracy's (2007:586) assertion that for abusive men to maintain control over their wives, they must exercise their power over them.

The interviews revealed that domestic violence commenced at different stages of the marriage relationship but most cases of domestic violence started within the early years of marriage. The cause of abuse, in most cases, was tied to the desire to control on the part of the husbands, infidelity, *lobola* and spiritual causation (as suggested by the way participants and their advisors responded to the violence). Domestic violence, as experienced by participants, assumed a variety of forms including battering, verbal and emotional abuse, economic abuse and limitations placed on women in terms of mobility and decision-making. Physical abuse was often a sequel to verbal abuse. While promiscuity was reported to be problematic within the Christian sample, it was not so among Muslim women who participated in the study. Although wife battering was a common denominator for both Christian and Muslim participants, the reasons for the battering were not necessarily the same.

7.3.1 Sources/ antecedents and forms of domestic violence

This section discusses the factors that contributed to domestic violence and the forms of violence participants experienced. The study revealed that violence was caused by a variety of factors as shall be explicated in the forthcoming subsections. Causes (sources and antecedents) and forms of domestic violence are discussed concurrently, given that certain aspects that serve as antecedents result in abuse.

7.3.1.1 The desire to control

Excessive control by husbands came up as a major factor influencing domestic violence among both Christian and Muslim women who participated in the study. Control was a key variable that accounted for domestic violence. All participants revealed that their abuse had to do with their husbands' desire to control them in one way or the other. While the violence experienced by the participants had many forms, the overarching cause was that men used the violence to ensure their control over their wives, to maintain their dominance and ensure their spouses' submissiveness. A number of statements from participants indicate that all abuse had to do with men's power over women. Regardless of what form it assumed, domestic violence emerged as a tool in the hands of abusive husbands to ensure conformity on the part of wives. As Moore (2008:778) suggests, "...men commit violence against women because they want to dominate and control women."

The desire to control manifested in a number of ways. From participants' responses it can be noted that abusive husbands expressed their control through isolation, curtailing mobility, behaviour prescriptions and controlling money.

Isolation

Abusive husbands isolated their spouses from relatives and friends. Being cut off from social networks emerged as a matter of great concern for the participants. For example, P11 said her husband did not allow her to visit her relatives often and that he did not allow her to have friends. As a result of the isolation from her relatives, P25 had this to say: "I feel like someone in a cage and a fish out of water". The excessive control that participants experienced made them feel trapped in their marriages which they viewed as some kind of mini-prisons. The abuse robbed them of a voice in their marriages as well as a support system. This effectively trapped participants in a cycle of violence.

Participants indicated that they needed to continue interacting with their natal kin after marriage, an indicator of the need to belong given that they are considered aliens (*vatorwa*) in the families into which they are married. Where one is cut off from social networks, one is left with no support base such that in the face of domestic violence the individual has limited support, something that would ensure the abuser maintains control. The use of isolation to prevent wives from seeing friends and relatives is a control mechanism (Ferrato 2000:7). Having been cut off from their social networks, participants in this study became what Mesatywa (2009:58) refers to as “hostages in their own homes”; without social support. Since socialising and communication can be empowering, some participants were denied the chance of this empowerment. Denying someone freedom of association is therefore denying the individual the power to seek assistance in the face of abuse and ultimately the capacity to leave an abusive situation (Ellece 2011:48). That abusive men isolate their spouses in a bid to ensure that they assert their control came out in other studies as well (Ogland 2011:30; Mesatywa 2009:58; Amenga-Etego 2006:31; Van Dyke 2005:40; Danis 2003:239; Koenig, Ahmed, Hossain & Mozumder 2003:274; Mabena 2002:103; Maluleke & Nadar 2002:14, Johnson 1995:284; Ferraro & Johnson 1983:327).

Curtailing mobility

Control was also manifested through curtailing movement. In this case the partners closely monitored their wives’ movements to ensure that they only went where they (abusive partners) allowed them to go. Curtailing the mobility of their spouses was one way in which abusive partners kept their wives under surveillance and isolated them from information, support and advice. This ensured the maintenance of male power and control. The abuse in question was a violation of participants’ freedom of movement which is enshrined in the constitution of Zimbabwe. One participant (P14) said, “My husband does not allow me to visit my relatives without his company”. Another one (P23) said, “My husband does not allow me to leave the home without his consent and knowledge. He always reminds me that my duty is to be at home”. Similarly, P26 said, “My husband does not allow me to do shopping alone.”

In other studies controlling mobility also emerged as a form of domestic abuse (Mabena 2002:103).

Behaviour prescriptions

It emerged that participants were subjected to behaviour prescriptions by their abusive husbands. Domestic violence was meant to ensure conformity on the part of the wives. P11 said that sometimes she was forced to visit her husband's relatives as well as receive them with hospitality when they visit but he did not do the same for her relatives. Control also manifested through prescriptions on how participants should treat their in-laws especially mothers-in-law. As one participant (P29) said, "*My husband sometimes beats me up for allegedly not treating his mother with respect*". When they complain about their ill-treatment by their daughters-in-law, their sons (husbands) may respond by beating up their wives as a disciplinary measure and to show that they are in charge.

The finding that abusive partners prescribe the behaviour of their victims concurs with findings obtained in other studies (Ellece 2011:48; Mesatywa 2009:147; Romito 2008:17; Van Natta 2001:30).

Controlling money

Financial issue emerged as a source of violence, with some husbands exercising strict control over finances. This issue is discussed at length under section 7.3.1.4.

Controlling behaviours by abusive spouses was indicative of abusers' superiority complex over their wives. Furthermore, control suggests that abusive partners largely perceived their wives as possessions, property that required monitoring. One participant's statement "My husband treats me like a child" (P8) epitomises the controlling behaviour exhibited by abusive partners. The analogy of a child shows that the abuser treated his wife as someone immature and not capable of making sound decisions. It is one of the diminutive elements of male dominance.

In conclusion, domestic violence was linked to the desire to control. In this connection, domestic violence served as a mechanism by which abusive men ensured conformity on the part of their partners. Domestic violence was thus used as a means to ensure compliance.

7.3.1.2 Extra-marital affairs

Eight Christian participants indicated that it was within a year of their marriages that they realised that their husbands were being unfaithful. This was despite the fact that

the couples were married in church and that their husbands professed a belief in monogamy and faithfulness to their wives until death. In this connection, the Shona saying '*Hakuna mutunhu usina mago*' (Shona expression which literally means there is no territory without wasps and implies that no territory is without evil doers) holds true. This is indicative of the fact that Christians are not immune to social problems that also characterise non-Christian communities.

These participants felt that infidelity was the basis of the violence they experienced. They reported that when their spouses engaged in extra-marital affairs, they (the women) noticed that the warmth in the marriage relationship dwindled and there was a significant drop in the level of economic support given by the spouses. When the women challenged their husbands about their extra-marital affairs, this resulted in domestic violence. As one participant (P2) put it, "My husband would not tolerate my questioning, asserting his right to do whatever he wants as a man."

For complaining about her husband's extra-marital affairs, the wife is seen as challenging her husband's authority and entitlements while this is also perceived (by the abusive husband) as a challenge to his traditional rights. By subjecting their wives to violence when they challenged them about their affairs, the men expected their wives to accept their promiscuity. It might be expected that men professing Christianity would make their affairs very secretive and would even be remorseful when their wives asked them about it. Far from this, participants revealed that they were victims of beatings or verbal abuse when they complained about their husbands' extra-marital affairs. The behaviour of the participants' spouses seems to suggest a masculinity that celebrates sexual promiscuity as a marker of manliness. In light of this, Clowes et al's (2010:15) contention that "men are violent when their masculinity is threatened" seems tenable.

Two participants (P8 & P17) alleged that the women with whom their husbands had extra-marital affairs had used some form of witchcraft to attract them (their spouses). P8 said that she believed her husband's girlfriend had bewitched him in such a way that he saw her (the participant) as filthy. The belief in witchcraft is prevalent among the Shona people. It is not uncommon to hear people explaining human behaviour in terms of the influence of witchcraft. It is often believed that when a man engages in an extra-marital-affair to the extent that he abandons his wife and children, the woman in

the extra-marital affair would have used some form of witchcraft to turn the man's heart away from his family.

Most of the participants attributed the infidelity-related violence they were experiencing to their husbands' own mischief. They felt cheated by their husbands who had promised to cherish them for life and not to love any other women as long as they (participants) were alive. The participants felt that although their husbands were baptised in the church and occasionally attended church services, they were being hypocritical. These participants did not see any external forces at work but put the blame squarely on their husbands who had failed to live up to their marriage vows. One participant (P2) said, "My husband is responsible for his unfaithfulness. It reflects the kind of person he is." Another participant (P5) intimated that she did not see any external forces behind her husband's infidelity.

A common thread that runs through all the cases of domestic violence related to promiscuity is that participants did not tolerate infidelity on the part of their husbands and that their husbands were not remorseful about their extra-marital affairs.

These results are consistent with Suda's (1996:78) assertion that men's infidelity, which was traditionally accepted as a masculine trait, is no longer strongly upheld in many modern African marriages, especially by wives. That sexual promiscuity on the part of the husband fuels domestic violence is confirmed in the literature (Chireshe & Chireshe 2011:102; Mesatywa 2009:145; Bowman 2003:854; Armstrong 1998).

The extra-marital affairs also often led to emotional abuse. For the 8 participants whose husbands had extra-marital affairs, emotional abuse was the sequel to physical abuse. Every form of abuse is likely to result in the abused being hurt emotionally as well. With physical also came verbal abuse and neglect which constitute emotional abuse.

Three of the eight participants whose husbands' violence was related to extra-marital affairs revealed that they were no longer enjoying their conjugal rights because their spouses got sexual satisfaction elsewhere. This deprivation may also be understood in terms of emotional abuse. The following two examples show that some abusive men denied their partners their conjugal rights. P5 said that her husband no longer had sex with her and P19 said her husband's performance in bed had declined because he

spent his energy elsewhere. These responses suggest that the participants no longer enjoyed their conjugal rights as a result of their husbands' sexual promiscuity.

Among the Shona, there is a statement often made by wives whose husbands deny them sex, "*handina kuvinga sadza pano*" (Shona which literally means, I did not come here for food, particularly *sadza* which is the staple food of the Shona people). The implication is that what motivates women to enter into marriage is the need for sexual intimacy, not food.

All eight participants who experienced infidelity-related violence indicated that they were also victims of economic abuse since available funds were being channelled to girlfriends, leaving them economically deprived.

Although each of the eight women were in monogamous unions, the picture that emerges from the study is that formal monogamy was practised alongside backdoor polygamy. This corresponds with Suda's (1996:79) assertion that, while polygamy is becoming less fashionable, monogamy is practised alongside "clandestine polygamy according to which men keep mistresses whom they support, sometimes lavishly". This could result in dwindling financial support for the family as one participant (P3) explained, "My husband has a girlfriend with whom he goes to South Africa for shopping. He spends a lot of money on her."

What can be noted from the responses is that instead of enjoying the financial support of their husbands, as well as enjoying the fruits of their labour, the participants under review had become a neglected lot, economic prisoners.

Risk of contracting HIV and AIDS

Extra-marital affairs not only resulted in domestic violence but also carried the threat of contracting sexually transmitted infections including HIV and AIDS. AIDS is a global pandemic affecting people from all walks of life. However, women are more vulnerable because of their social position. The imbalance of power in marriage curtails women's ability to negotiate how and when sex is done. Given that HIV is mostly transmitted through sex, men's extra-marital sexual unions increase their risk of contracting HIV. In this study men's infidelity, coupled women's inability to negotiate the terms of sex, made some participants vulnerable to HIV and AIDS. Two participants (P4 & P22) revealed that they had contracted HIV as a result of their

husbands' infidelity. One participant (P4) said, "It is not easy to deny your husband sex even if you feel strongly that sometimes this is risky... I have contracted HIV through my husband." Another participant (P22) also recounted how she had contracted HIV through her promiscuous husband. Fear of violence came out as a constraint to the participants' ability to negotiate condom use or to refuse to have sex with their partners. Furthermore, bridewealth (*roora*), to be discussed at length in a later section (7.3.1.3), also contributed to women's powerlessness in sexual matters.

Extra-marital affairs are thus linked to the risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. The headship of the husband and the use of violence made it difficult for participants to negotiate use of condoms or to refuse to have sex with their husbands. As such, participants were compelled to have unprotected sex. In this regard male dominance and domestic violence colluded to render women powerless. The vulnerability of married women to HIV and AIDS is well documented (Francisco 2010:81; Lalthapersad-Pillay 2009:15; Gichaara 2008:196; Mungwini 2008:209; Desai 2005:141; Chitando 2004:152; Takyi 2003:1223; Phiri 2002:24; Muzvidziwa 2001:151; Wolff, Blanc & Gage 2000:303).

From some of the participants' experiences, it can be noted that domestic violence and HIV and AIDS coexisted. As Desai (2005:152) states, "Domestic violence directly and indirectly exacerbates vulnerability to HIV. Men who engage in extra-marital affairs have a high likelihood of being violent".

7.3.1.3 Accusation of Infidelity

Three Christian participants (P6, P10 & P21) revealed that the violence they experienced was triggered by unfounded suspicion on the part of their husbands that they (the women) were having extra-marital affairs. All three said this was a result of their spouses' relatives who wrongly informed their husbands that they were cheating on them.

In Shona marriages the extended family is very important. Couples stay, not only with their children, but with other relatives, such as aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, cousins and so on. While relatives can be a source of support and social security, they can also be dangerous for a couple since they may interfere with the life of the couple to such an extent that they may cause the eruption of violence.

While relatives from both the husband and the wife's side can be equally dangerous, most cases of disturbances that have to do with relatives emanate from the husband's side because a woman leaves her relatives to live with her husband and his relatives. In most cases the wife is perceived as the one who has come to disturb the peace, especially when her husband is a breadwinner who is employed and receiving a good salary from which relatives also benefit. The coming of a woman into a man's life in marriage is sometimes not received with joy by those relatives who are used to being supported by the man. Sometimes accusations of infidelity are intended to cause separation of spouses so that relatives can continue to enjoy the financial support of the unattached man. For the participants under review, relatives were a key factor in their abuse.

While the three participants did not report physical assault as a result of the jealousy, they noted a high level of verbal, psychological and economic abuse which included a denial of conjugal rights. Accusations of infidelity are usually associated with jealousy and abusive men are often characterised by extreme jealousy which may be accompanied by false accusations (Hampton, Vandergriff-Avery & Kim 1999:47; Mesatywa 2009:134).

The next two sections present the sequel to violence related to accusations of infidelity.

Denial of support for children born during the period of conflict

Of the three women who indicated that they were wrongly accused of infidelity, one (P6) fell pregnant during the period of conflict and the husband denied responsibility for the pregnancy saying that the woman's infidelity had caused the pregnancy. Even after the birth of the child, the husband did not economically support the child. The abuse was thus extended to the child who was considered illegitimate, resulting in a lack of economic support and love from the father. The participant reported that to make matters worse, the husband called the child by the name of the man he believed was having an extramarital affair with his wife.

Accusation of bringing AIDS into the marriage

One of the three women who were falsely accused of infidelity (P 21), reported that she was verbally abused by her husband who accused her of bringing AIDS into the family. Her husband's sister added to the insult by saying, "*Tinoziva kuti AIDS*

inounzwa mumba nevarume kwete zvokuti mukadzi ndiye anouyisa AIDS mumba. Mwana uyu (murume) unogara achirwara neSTDs nokuda kwako” (Shona words literally translated as: “We know that AIDS is brought into the family by husbands and that it is not a wife who is the one who brings AIDS. This man (referring to her brother, the husband) often suffers from sexually transmitted diseases because of you (the accused woman)”).

The other participant (P10) whose experience of domestic violence was linked with false accusations of infidelity explained that her husband suspected that she was in love with a fellow teacher; an accusation that she vehemently rejected, but to no avail. She was eventually evicted from the matrimonial home by her husband who was assisted by his relatives. She narrated her ordeal thus:

I used to go to South Africa (Musina) to do some shopping without having any problems with my husband. It all started when my husband’s uncle, who was a cross boarder trader, lied to my husband that I had a love affair with a certain man based in Beitbridge. The man was said to assist me with the ferrying of goods from Musina to Beitbridge Border Post.

As already noted, all three participants who were falsely accused of infidelity were exposed to psychological and emotional abuse.

7.3.1.4 Rooru/Lobola-related abuse

The custom of *roora/lobola* has already been discussed at length in Chapter 2 on the role of women in African society. Six participants, all Christians, indicated that their abuse was closely related to this custom which caused their husbands to feel that they were not accountable to their wives because they had paid *lobola* for them. One participant (P9) reported:

My husband does not consider my opinion in most cases. When I try to reason with him that we need to discuss issues and arrive at decisions together, he would not have anything of that, citing his payment of roora as having given him the right to make decisions on my behalf.

Another (P19) said:

When we were still dating we had such an understanding that I believed my marriage to this man was going to be enjoyable. Our

relationship changed the moment he paid roora to my father. Paying lobola gave him a sense of possession. His words soon after lobola payment were, “Know that you are now married and that I am the head”. Ever since, our relationship has been one of a leader and his follower. Sometimes I regret why I got married to this man because to say the truth I have no voice in the marriage.

Participants in this study were very concerned about the payment of *roora* which contributed to their vulnerability in marriage. Some men felt that they owned their wives and so perceived them as property and not as partners. In this case *roora*, which traditionally joined families as a unity enhancer, emerged as a factor that powered male possessiveness and disempowered women. One participant (P5) reported as follows:

Whenever we have a disagreement, my husband always says, “You must bear in mind that I paid lobola for you” meaning that I should always agree with him because I am a kind of property to him.

The above statements also indicate that *roora* has a silencing effect on women. While *roora* empowers men to exercise authority on their wives, it disempowers women by relegating them to a position of servitude. It needs to be pointed out that it is not *roora* per se that is a problem, but its abuse. The abuse of the custom of *roora* thus puts women in a position of vulnerability. *Lobola*-related violence is associated with different forms of abuse including sexual, economic, verbal and emotional abuse. The risk owes to the lack of a voice that comes with *lobola*. Since *roora* results in the subjection and exposure of women to various forms of abuse, it has become, in Mazrui’s (1998:45) terminology, “an aspect of malevolent sexism”.

The issue of neglect of wives’ relatives on the grounds of payment of *roora* emerged as a matter of concern for some participants. One (P18) noted that:

Whenever I ask my husband to financially assist my parents and other close relatives, he reminds me, “Your parents overcharged roora and therefore they have had enough from me. You can’t give them anything because you have no money.” Although I am employed my husband makes it difficult for me to support my parents because he controls my salary.

While abusive men cited culture, as represented by *roora* payment, to justify their objectification of their wives, they tended to forget that culture expects husbands to continuously care for their in-laws as expressed in the Shona saying ‘*Mukwasha*

muonde haaperi kudyiwa (Which literally means that a son-in-law is like a fig tree which constantly supplies fruit). The saying implies that a son-in-law should continue to support his in-laws beyond payment of *roora*; he should not come to a point when he feels he has supported his in-laws enough. What is also apparent is that abusive men were selective in their appeal to culture. They only referred to those elements that tended to justify their behaviour and ignored those that were not supportive of the behaviour.

That *roora* can be a facilitator of the abuse of women is well documented (Chireshe & Chireshe 2010:217; Mesatywa 2009:147; Townsend 2008:30; Kambarami 2006:4; Ntsimane 2006:30; Burn 2005:24; Chitando 2004:153; Bowman 2003:853; Maluleke & Nadar 2002:14; Kethusegile et al 2000:165; Tsanga 1999:59; Armstrong 1998:40). The cited literature indicates that male domination and payment of *lobola* contributed to the victims' vulnerability to battering. As such, the abuse of the institution of *lobola* underpins the widespread abuse of wives by their husbands.

Findings of *lobola*-related abuse confirm Tsanga's (1999:61) assertion that "the payment of *lobola* is indicative of the reality that women are largely regarded as property that exchanges hands". When a man views his wife as a piece of property, it is unlikely that he would give her a voice in the marriage.

It is worth noting that although the *lobola* payment is not considered in Islamic marriages, two Muslim participants indicated that *lobola* was paid for them because their parents were not Muslim. However, both participants did not explicitly attribute the violence they experienced to *lobola*.

7.3.1.5 Economic abuse

Stringent control of family economic resources

A substantial number of participants (20 or 67%) indicated that they suffered economic abuse in the form of the control of finances, the deprivation of opportunities to seek employment and the withholding of financial support to run the home. Statements made by participants under 7.3.1.1 suggest that one of the ways abusive men controlled their wives was economic, whereby they would control their wives' salary, determine how family income should be spent and not allowing wives to

support their relatives. Even in cases where participants jointly contributed to family income, the wives were denied a voice in decisions of household expenditure.

The findings suggest that economic abuse is not an isolated phenomenon as it is linked to other forms of abuse such as physical, emotional and verbal abuse and the desire to control which is the most pervasive and overarching form of abuse. Given that half of the participants were unemployed, it could also be inferred that there was some association between unemployment and the increasing rates of domestic violence. While a dependency on the husband seemed to be positively correlated with domestic violence, it should also be noted that some victims of violence were in fact gainfully employed.

Some previous studies also revealed that economic violence was one form of violence which abused women experienced. Phiri (2001:94) found that some Christian husbands controlled the finances and excluded their wives from making decisions regarding the family expenditure. In a related study, Davhana-Maselesele, Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2009:2517) found that some women were not even at liberty to spend their own earnings without their partners' approval.

Lack of support for the family

The economic abuse experienced by some participants is in direct violation of the Domestic Violence Act Section 3, Subsection 1 (d) (i) which states that economic abuse includes “the unreasonable deprivation of economic or financial resources to which a complainant is entitled under the law or which the complainant requires out of necessity”.

One participant (P9) indicated that her husband, who had not disclosed upon marriage that he already had a wife, left Zimbabwe for South Africa where his first wife had gone to look for employment. Since then, he had not been financially supporting the participant and their two children. When he returned to Zimbabwe together with his first wife, the situation did not improve and the participant had to continue to fend for herself and children.

Four participants reported that their husbands neglected them financially and rarely settled bills such as water and electricity, putting their families in difficult situations. Of these, two were employed women who reported that their husbands were

unconcerned about the dire financial straits of their families. The two participants explained that they had to use their meagre resources to finance their families. One participant (P7) said:

To ask for money from my husband is like inviting trouble for me. He would utter such bad words that I will have to think twice before approaching him for financial support. He does not beat me up but sometimes his words are more painful than battering. He provides when he wants to, otherwise I use my meager salary.

This finding corresponds with Phiri's (2001:94) study on domestic violence in Christian homes in Durban which revealed that some husbands did not pay utility bills, resulting in the disconnection of services to their families' homes.

The findings suggest that while abusive men want to control, in some cases they shun their financial obligation to their families.

Deprivation of employment opportunities

Depriving someone the right to seek employment constitutes economic abuse according to the Domestic Violence Act Section 3, subsection 1(d) (ii) which states that economic abuse includes "denying the complainant the right to seek employment or engage in any income-generating activity."

Four Muslim women reported that they were denied direct access to employment outside the home but this did not apply to any of the Christian participants. The Muslim women who indicated that their husbands did not want them to work outside the home felt that this was at variance with the Islamic principle of allowing everyone, whether male or female, to seek employment. Two of the women indicated that they had tried to persuade their husbands to let them seek employment outside the home but they were told that their key role was housekeeping. One reported:

Realising that my husband's salary was not enough for our basic needs, I tried to talk nicely to my husband requesting him to allow me to look for a job but he told me that that was beyond my responsibility. I had to look after children. He said he did not want his children to be looked after by a maid as that was my duty (P25).

Another remarked:

Although my husband is getting some substantial income from his business, it is still not enough. I thought it would be good for me to look for a job but he would not allow that (P30).

Deprivation of employment opportunities served as a mechanism of control because lack of employment on the part of the participants meant their economic dependence and therefore lack of independence not only on financial matters but social aspects as well.

7.3.1.6 The role of alcohol

An interesting finding of this study is that although alcohol consumption was found to influence domestic violence in a number of other studies (for example, Modie-Moroka 2010:186; Mabena 2002:98; Wiehe 1998:10), this was not the case here. In the context of the current study, none of the respondents attributed the violence to alcohol consumption by the perpetrators. While three participants indicated that their husbands consumed alcohol, they did not ascribe the violence they experienced at the hands of the husbands to alcohol abuse. The majority of abusive partners, as indicated by the participants in the present study, did not consume alcohol. The picture that emerges is that with or without alcohol an individual can be abusive.

7.3.2 Summary

The interviews with participants revealed that the abusive spouses felt threatened by what they perceived as their wives' desire to assert their rights and this often resulted in battering. Most cases of domestic violence in this study were related to the man's social and economic control over their wives and the use of violence was a tool of asserting their power; a way to bring a wayward wife into line. It emerged from the study that where male dominance was hegemonic and dictatorial, it was positively correlated with various forms of violence.

The experiences of the women participating in this study constituted physical, economic and emotional/psychological abuse. All these forms were subsumed under the desire to control and maintain dominance over the abused. Physical abuse was found to be a key instrument in the hands of the abuser to enforce compliance. Feeling threatened by the conduct of their spouses, some violent partners simply beat them up.

Physical violence or the threat of it was intimidating and so constituted emotional abuse.

By controlling funds and limiting access to resources, the abusive partners ensured that they maintained a position of dominance relative to their spouses. Regardless of employment status, participants were worried about the way in which their partners denied them access to economic resources. The predicament of a majority of participants was one of economic vulnerability. While some of the employed participants were denied the chance to control their own income, some of the unemployed women were denied the opportunity to seek employment.

Coupled with control over funds was social control whereby abusers isolated their spouses from friends and relatives. In so doing, the abusers robbed their victims of any support base and as such maintained their hold on the participants. The excessive social control constituted psychological or emotional abuse. Psychological abuse, according to the Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act, Section 3, Sub-section 2b includes “repeated exhibition of possessiveness which is such as to constitute a serious invasion of the complainant’s privacy, liberty, integrity or security”. Going by this definition, all participants in this study suffered psychological or emotional abuse. Abusive partners, as revealed by the present study, exhibited possessiveness by controlling their spouses’ associations. They felt they could do whatever they wanted with their wives because they (wives) belonged to them. By subjecting their partners to excessive control, abusive men relegated them to a subservient position which is a master-servant relationship and not a partnership. The participants who experienced excessive control could be described as victims of terror if one subscribes to Johnson’s (2008:84) characterisation of the abusive male partner as an “intimate terrorist”. Johnson further explains that the “intimate terrorist” isolates the wife from her family, peers and the wider community in order to take away her support system thereby making her totally dependent on him.

While some of the abusers did not explicitly refer to their payment of *lobola*, Biblical texts or Quranic texts to justify their dominance, their conduct and the attendant justification of this conduct suggested some appeal to these. Abusive men’s assertion of their superiority suggests some influence from both culture and religious texts. While biblical texts, such as Ephesians 5:22-24 and Colossians 3:18, do not explicitly

direct men to beat or abuse their wives, their teaching on unlimited subservience on the part of the wife could lay a fertile ground for spousal abuse. It could give a man the feeling that since he ought to be obeyed in everything, disobedience on the part of his wife warrants some punishment to 'bring her into line'. Surah 4:34, which prescribes wife beating as one of the disciplinary measures against a wife who is insubordinate, could be interpreted to show that wives ought to submit to their husbands with husbands having the power to discipline their disobedient wives.

In conclusion, domestic violence emerged as a multi-faceted phenomenon. Different types of abuse often occurred concurrently. Most participants experienced more than one type of abuse. Physical abuse was almost always accompanied by other forms of violence such as economic abuse and emotional abuse. The interconnectedness and concurrence of different forms of abuse is also affirmed by a number of writers such as Jewkes, Levin & Penn-Kekana (2002:1603), Modie-Moroka (2010:185), Slabbert (2010:30), Johnson (2008:85), Scott-Tilley, Tilton & Sandel (2010:26), Stephens & McDonald (2002:78), and Flinck, Paavilainen & Asredt-Kurki (2005:385).

The forthcoming section presents the findings on participants' responses to domestic violence.

7.4 RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE

Whereas, in the previous section the reported reasons for abuse were discussed, this section will discuss women's response as well as the advice they received from those to whom they reported the abuse. The most frequent avenue of reporting was the religious leaders and communities, that is, fellow Christians or fellow Muslims, followed by reports to friends and relatives. Other avenues, though important, were secondary.

7.4.1 Reporting to religious leaders and communities

Owing to the centrality of religion in the lives of the participants, most of them (14 Christian and five Muslim) turned to their religious communities for counselling. The participants indicated that they felt that, as members of religious communities, they needed to seek the advice of religious leaders. They felt that religious communities were a source of advice and support. That a majority of the abused women seek help

from their religious communities, especially from their pastors, was also evident in other studies (Choi 2011:44; Slabbert 2010:158; Sisselman 2009:22; Wendt 2008:150; Beaulaurier et al 2007:750; Richardson 2007:3; Binford-Weaver 2005:99; Gustafon 2005:3; Shannon-Lewy & Dull 2005:657; Knickmeyer 2004:76; Rotunda et al 2004:362; Horne & Levitt 2003:84; Manetta et al 2003:7; Phiri 2001:98; Cooper-White 1996:15). These studies show that many victims of domestic violence need contact with their religious communities amidst their crisis.

In keeping with Isichei's (1995:333) suggestion that misfortunes and suffering propel women to seek help from prophetic prayer, two Christian participants belonging to the Zionist/Apostolic churches reported that, in the face of domestic violence, they sought help from prophets in African Initiated Churches in the belief that they had the power to assist in ending the violence. The key motivator for such a step was the belief in spiritual causation, that is, the belief that some spiritual powers were the cause of the violence.

7.4.1.1 Responses by religious leaders and laypersons

'Be submissive to your husband'

Ten participants reported that religious leaders and lay members of their religious communities advised them to try to be better wives and to humble themselves before their husbands. The advisors believed that the abused were in that situation because of their non-compliance with their husbands' expectations of them. Some participants revealed that they were charged, by those to whom they reported, of not showing respect to their husbands, including answering back when their husbands were admonishing them.

The participants were also advised to adjust to the moods of their husbands, to study their likes and dislikes in order to avoid provoking them. One participant (P11) said that when she took her problem to the church, the pastor said she had to submit to her husband and stop talking too much to avoid the beatings. Another participant (P30) said, "When I reported the beating to one of the senior women in our religion, she advised, 'Study your husband carefully ... to prevent being beaten. Remember that your husband is the head of the family'." This emphasis on submission and compliance made it difficult for participants to escape the violence. As Levitt and

Ware (2006b:1170) assert “Gender norms that prescribe passivity and compliance make it difficult for women to enact resistance.”

The advice from religious communities clearly indicates a victim-blaming attitude. The responses assume that women facing abuse have the capacity to stop the abuse by correcting their behaviour. Another assumption is that talking on the part of the abused women is provocative, and that this indirectly turns the abuser into a victim of provocation. The responses given do not refer to the abuser as the one who is responsible for the violence. As such, these responses show sympathy for the abuser.

A number of studies have found that abused women are sometimes advised by their communities to be better wives, to improve their conduct, and to avoid further abuse (Sharp 2011:90; Gonzalez 2010:87; Nason-Clark 2009:385; Sisselman 2009:20; Sheikh 2008:91; Wendt 2008:151; Levitt & Ware 2006a:220; Abugideiri 2005:4; Gustafon 2005:89; Holmes 2004:44; Moyo 2004a:441; Knickmeyer 2004:161; Knickmeyer et al 2003:49; Maluleke & Nadar 2002:11; Phiri 2001:98; Fiorenza 1995b:143). These studies also indicate that both society and religion collaborate with abusers in blaming victims for the abuse, thus effectively silencing and disempowering the abused.

‘Pray about the situation’

Alongside the advice to be passive in order to satisfy abusive partners, was the advice to pray for their husbands. Prayer was seen as a way of seeking God’s intervention, the conviction being that prayer would transform the abuser as a result of God’s intervention. A number of statements from participants suggested that abused women were encouraged to pray in the face of abuse. Two examples will suffice. One participant (P3) reported that she was advised by her pastor’s wife to pray unceasingly, since prayer has the power to transform the abuser. Another participant (P13) reported that her pastor told her to pray to God and that everything will be fine.

The importance of prayer for the advisors was thus underscored. The quotations suggest that prayer was perceived as transformative. It appears that prayer was regarded as a key resource in dealing with the problem of domestic violence. Emphasis on prayer presupposes that the underlying cause of the violence is spiritual, and that a spiritual solution is required. This perception of domestic violence is likely to prevent abused women from seeking legal recourse.

Similar findings were obtained in previous studies (Gillum 2009:10; Amenga-Etego 2006:35; Hodge 2005:287; Maluleke & Nadar 2002:11; Phiri 2001:95) which revealed that religious communities advised victims of domestic violence to pray for God to intervene. However, a theological feminist, Fiorenza (1995b:146) is critical of prayer as a solution to the problem of domestic violence. She argues that the advice that the victim has to pray has the effect compelling victims to accept their suffering without resistance. In effect, Fiorenza's argument is that prayer is not effective in curbing domestic violence, contrary to the perceptions of the participants and their advisors in the current study. In fact, she sees prayer as unhelpful, as giving a false impression that a problem is going to be solved when it is not.

Biblical verses to comfort and strengthen the abused

Two participants reported that some fellow Christians comforted them by quoting Biblical verses. Such verses were to the effect that the suffering experienced by the abused would come to an end. As one participant (P3) said, "Members of the church comforted me with verses and stories from the Bible such as the story of Job. They said being abused is a life reality that passes away."

It is not uncommon to hear the story of Job being narrated to people in distress, including those suffering domestic violence. The story of Job illustrates that individuals may go through devastating situations but these would only be temporary. The use of the story of Job is meant to encourage the abused to endure the suffering in the hope of getting consolation from God just as the Biblical Job experienced.

Bringing partners for joint counselling

Five participants (four Christian and one Muslim) were asked to bring their partners for joint counselling by religious leaders but all of them said that this was a challenge since their spouses were only nominal believers who rarely attended religious services. Three of the five participants reported that their spouses became even more violent when they learnt that they (the participants) had taken the matter to their religious communities. The advice to bring partners for counselling may suggest the perception that both spouses are responsible for the violence and that both would need assistance. While this advice sounds friendlier and more holistic than advice where the victim is held accountable as the sole stimulant to the violence, its effectiveness is

not beyond questioning. Those of a feminist orientation contend that couples counselling tends to incriminate the victim (Thompson 2001:82).

The advice to undergo couples counselling was also given in other studies which involved abused women who turned to religious leaders for assistance (Choi 2011:135; Dyer 2010:43; Ko 2007:44; Rotunda et al 2004:363).

The preservation of the marriage

All 19 participants who sought help from religious communities indicated that they were reminded of the importance of maintaining the family unit and they were advised to avoid the disintegration of the family by not divulging family secrets. Three Muslim women who sought help from senior Muslim women were advised that they were to preserve the sanctity of their marriage at all costs; they were to make an effort to preserve their marriages.

The implication of this advice is that the woman alone is responsible for the cohesion of the family. This is in keeping with the Shona proverb *Musha mukadzi* (meaning that it is the woman who makes a home, who ensures family cohesion) and the Shona saying *usafukura hapwa* (which points to the importance of keeping family secrets). In this connection, reporting abuse to the police or some legal institution becomes unacceptable. In addition, the desire to maintain family secrets, which deterred some participants from reporting the abuse, is also in keeping with the Shona proverb “*Chakafukidza dzimba matenga*” which underlines the need to keep domestic secrets, confining them to the private realm and not making them public. Thus maintaining the secrecy of domestic violence would have the effect of protecting the image of the family as well as maintaining the marriage union, given that reporting to public institutions is considered as some kind of application for separation or divorce on the part of the one who has reported.

The prioritisation of the marriage union by those to whom abused women reported and by the women themselves, also came out of other studies (Choi 2011:138; Kulwicki et al 2010:733; Wendt 2008:149; Ellison et al 2007:1096; Holmes 2004:52; Thompson 2001:82; Armstrong 1998:26). In these studies, abused women were advised to remain in marriage and to work things out. The advice was based on the perception of marriage as a sacred bond, a lifelong commitment and the conviction that God hated divorce (see Malachi 2:16).

Attributing the violence to the devil

While this section has overlaps with the preceding one which reports on the advice to pray, it is necessary to separate the two because while the preceding section on prayer focuses on the solution, this one focuses on the cause of domestic violence. The study showed that five of the participants, four Christian and one Muslim, perceived the violence they experienced at the hands of their spouses to be the work of Satan or the devil. For that reason, they did not contemplate reporting the matter to the police or consider solutions such as divorce or (temporary) separation. This spiritualisation of the cause of violence tended to result in viewing spirituality, particularly the use of prayer, as the solution. One participant (P5) had this to say: “The church members and leadership did not blame my husband for the violence but instead saw the devil at work in the family; hence they encouraged me to pray so that things would get better.” Similarly, another participant (P8) reported that a counsellor from her church suggested that her problem may have been caused by evil spirits and as such it could only be effectively addressed through prayer.

Since the devil is implicated in the violence, it is most unlikely that measures such as reporting to the police would be considered acceptable. Blaming the violence on evil spirits has the effect of exonerating the perpetrator of any wrong doing and this is likely to fuel further violence. This may put the victim in a very difficult situation. In effect, the victim is deterred from seeking legal solutions or some other practical solution to end the violence or leave an abusive situation.

The spiritualisation of domestic violence has been found to perpetuate domestic violence and also to have a detrimental effect on the abused. Nason-Clark (2004:306) states that the tendency to “spiritualise social problems” works against seeking solutions to the problem. Similarly, Amenga-Etego (2006:35) argues that to attribute domestic violence to evil spirits is to take responsibility away from the abuser and this does not help the abuser to change.

Spiritual therapy by church prophets

Two participants reported that the prophets they consulted gave them ‘holy water’ as a form of therapy (treatment). The holy water was said to make them immune to further violence from their abusive partners. They had to bath with, as well as to drink, the holy water at prescribed times. One of the women (P17) said that the therapy

administered to her by the prophet did not yield any results, while the other woman (P20) said she had some relief, but that this was short-lived and that the violence was continuing. While the two participants were from Zionist/Apostolic churches, help-seeking of this nature is not confined to adherents of these churches. In the Masvingo province it is now common for people from all walks of life to seek solutions to life problems from prophets.

Encouragement to leave abusive situations

Five Christian participants revealed that they were advised by members of their churches, including some religious leaders, to seek legal recourse in the event that the domestic violence did not stop. The advice was based on the belief that God did not want people to suffer. One participant (P12) said her pastor suggested that she report the abuse to the police and allow the law to take its course. She reported the pastor as having said:

When preaching from the pulpit, we encourage people to solve problems through prayer, but the reality is that sometimes prayers do not offer practical solutions. In this case, what is required is a practical course of action- like going to lawyers or the police.

The finding that religious leaders may at times encourage abused women to leave abusive relationships was also found in other studies (for example, Gilbert 2011:130; Dyer 2010:43; Binford-Weaver 2007:100; Broderick 2007:42; Rotunda et al 2004:363). In these studies, pastors and other religious leaders emerged as prioritising the safety of victims of domestic violence.

In summation, from the responses of religious communities, it can be noted that participants received mixed reactions. As found in a number of studies (Nason-Clark et al 2004:19; Knickmeyer et al 2003:48), participants who turned to their religious communities for help met with a variety of responses, ranging from encouragement to leave abusive situations to advice that put them at risk of further violence because divorce was seen as being against Christian principles. The ambivalence in the religious communities' response is also suggested by Sisselman (2009:20) who views the involvement of abused women in a faith community as having both positive and negative effects.

7.4.1.2 Not seeking help from religious leaders and communities: Rationale

Three participants indicated that they did not report the abuse to religious leaders, church members, or the police because they did not want to lose their status in society as a result of the publicity that might result. They indicated that as public figures it was difficult for them to disclose the abuse to church members as this might make them the subject of gossip. They feared being labelled as failures, thus presenting a picture that contradicted that which the society had of them.

One participant (P1) indicated that as someone with a respectable status in society she was concerned that people would look down upon her if they heard that she was a victim of domestic violence. Another participant (P16), a pastor's wife, felt that it was not a good idea to report to her religious community as this might bring shame and embarrassment to her, her husband and the church as a whole.

The results suggest that public figures do not live for themselves alone because concern for what the public would say and feel deterred some high ranking participants from seeking help from their religious communities. Thus a feeling of shame made it difficult for the participants in question to report the abuse. The desire to maintain their integrity and that of their abusers made it difficult for them to report the abuse. The finding that people who have high status feel more compelled to keep the abuse secret than those who are from the lower strata of society also came out of some previous studies (Phiri 2001:95; Townsend 2008:64).

7.4.2 Informing friends and relatives

About a quarter of the participants (7/30), that is, two Muslim and five Christian women, indicated that they decided to share their experiences with relatives, including relatives of their spouses, and close friends (mostly religious) as well as mediators (*vanyai*⁵⁹). Seeking advice from relatives corresponds with Townsend's (2008:41) assertion that some women seek help from in-laws when faced with domestic

⁵⁹The term *vanyai* (plural-*munyai*-singular) refers to men and women who serve as intermediaries in the marriage process and who facilitate marriage arrangements between the family of the bride and that of the groom. *Lobola* payment is mediated by a *munyai* who plays a central role in Shona marriage and is called upon when there is discord in the marriage.

violence. The participants had no intention of making the violence public by going to the police or seeking the advice of religious leaders.

Both Christian and Muslim participants who reported the abuse to relatives believed that intervention by relatives would stop the abuse. The following statement by a Muslim participant (P27) epitomises the need to report to relatives:

We are encouraged to sort out our problems as couples but if this fails, the next step encouraged is to involve relatives. When this fails we are encouraged to go to the prayer leader (Imam). While seeking legal recourse is permissible, it is not encouraged as it tarnishes the image of the family concerned as well as that of the religious community.

From the quotation, it is apparent that the victim is given the responsibility to sort out the problem. In addition, legal solutions are discouraged. As a result, those who abide by that advice are likely to persevere in the face of continued violence. The advice shows more concern for the image of the abusers and religious communities than individuals reeling under abuse. In effect, the advice does not offer solace to the abused.

7.4.2.1 Responses of friends and relatives

Blaming the victim

Blaming the victim was not only a common response of religious leaders and laypersons, but also of friends and relatives. Four participants (two Christian and two Muslim) reported that their relatives held them responsible for the violence saying that they were not submissive and were not fulfilling their wifely duties adequately. The advice the participants received was that they had to submit to their husbands and not to challenge them. The participants indicated that those friends and relatives to whom they reported suggested that the violence they were facing was triggered by their behaviour towards their husbands. One participant (P19) said that her aunt suggested that she had been beaten up because she was not submissive as the Bible taught and that the onus was upon her to change her behaviour to prevent further beatings.

A number of issues related to victim-blaming attitudes that emerged are: that non-compliance on the part of the wife accounts for wife abuse supported by Biblical texts; and that culture determines that the perpetrator's response is to a change in the

victim's behaviour. Underpinning the advice to be subservient to husbands is the patriarchal system that advocates the dominance of men which, from a feminist perspective, places women at risk of abuse. The patriarchal rules regard certain levels of abuse against women as a way of keeping a woman in her place. The blaming of the victim was invariably linked to the endorsement of patriarchy and had a propensity to keep the abused in the abusive relationships. Blaming the victim suggests that the abused has violated socially accepted behaviour and is therefore responsible for the violence. In this case, the abuser is exonerated of wrongdoing. In the context of promiscuity on the part of the man, the advice given to four of the participants who experienced infidelity-related abuse, showed some covert acceptance of male promiscuity. P3 reported the following which showed that her aunt, to whom she turned in the face of domestic violence, condoned male promiscuity:

My aunt told me that all men do it. She also said her husband used to do it but has since matured and is no longer doing it.

This piece of advice suggests that the abused is expected to accept her situation as normal. The advice is in keeping with Chitando's (2004:153) statement that abused women who have promiscuous husbands are often advised "to bear the burden with resoluteness".

Furthermore, two of the participants who had experienced infidelity-related violence were advised to improve their sexual skills in order to prevent their husbands from seeking sexual satisfaction from outside the marriage. One participant (P15) reported that her aunt had told her to make the sexual act lively by being active and not behaving "like a log".

Considering that female friends and relatives to whom the abused turned for help also blamed the victims, it can be inferred that women sometimes collaborate with men in domestic violence. This notion is implied by Fiorenza (1995b:136) when she writes "Cultural and religious disciplining practices play a decisive role in securing women's continuing collaboration in and their acquiescence in domestic violence". Fiorenza's contention here is that culture and religion socialise women to collaborate with men in domestic violence against those of their kind.

While participants in this study were blamed for the violence, none of them blamed themselves for the violence, a finding that contradicts the literature (see Davhana-

Maselesele 2011:1; Gonzalez 2010:87; Madu et al 2010:2879; Chireshe & Chireshe 2009:93; Johnson 2008:84). The participants insisted that they had not done anything to provoke the abuse. They blamed their abusers and in some cases spiritual and mystical forces for the abuse they suffered. While the finding that the participants did not blame themselves for the abuse could imply more chances of reporting it to the authorities, the realisation of this, for participants in the present study, was stifled by religious and cultural factors.

'Silence is power'

Five participants, three Christian and two Muslim, reported that their friends and relatives advised them to maintain silence in the face of the abuse as 'silence is power'. It was believed that when one does not answer back in the face of domestic violence, one will in effect be weakening the abuser. Non-retaliation was thus perceived as curbing further domestic violence. One participant (P2) said that her mother-in-law told her that silence conquers everything and so she should not answer back in the face of abuse. Another participant (P21) said her grandmother advised her not to go about publicising the abuse as this might make her husband more violent.

The silence advised involved not questioning the abuser about the abuse and not divulging the abuse to members of the public. This silence was believed (by the advisors) to result in the subsiding of the violence. The assumption behind this piece of advice was that if a woman does not answer back and does not talk publicly about the abuse, the abuser would get weakened and stop the violence. However, this was not the case. The abuse did not stop in the case of the participants in the present study. Far from stopping the violence, the silence appeared to nurture it. To the perpetrator, the violence seemed to pay dividends as it enabled him to control his victim, knowing that there will be no reprisals. This finding confirms Hampton et al's (1999:245) assertion that "Domestic violence will continue when the awards drawn from being violent outweigh the costs of not being violent". This means that a man who receives positive results from being violent without having to pay a price for this, is likely to continue with the violent behaviour.

The finding that very often victims of violence are advised to keep it a secret, echoes previous findings of Pazeraite (2008:92), Ruiz (2005:15), Phiri (2001:95) and Armstrong (1998:30).

The importance of preserving marriage and family unity

Three participants, two Christian and one Muslim, indicated that their female relatives, especially aunts, emphasised the need to endure suffering in order to keep their marriages intact for the sake of their own social standing as well as the welfare of their children. In this connection, P14 said:

When I reported to my aunt, she advised me to persevere in the marriage so as to protect my dignity which comes with the status of being married. In addition, she said I had to consider the welfare of my children, which would be severely threatened when I decide to leave.

In the same vein, another participant (P26) said her sister advised that despite the abuse she was experiencing, it was important for her to keep the marriage for her sake and that of her two children.

The picture that emerges from the advice given is that sometimes victims are forced to stay in abusive marriages because they want to maintain their marital status as advised by relatives. This suggests some subscription to patriarchal norms. Benefits of staying with their children and getting respect from society were factors that tied women to unhappy marriages. Love, which should be the building block of marriage, is rendered irrelevant by domestic violence and the attendant advice to accept the violence. The advice given shows that communities can be more concerned with marriage than with the welfare of the abused; family interests take precedence over those of individuals, a common feature of African societies.

That marriage was perceived as taking precedence over the welfare of victims was also a finding from previous studies (Bowman 2003:51; Johnson 2008:55). These studies revealed that abused women were encouraged to remain married for the sake of the home or for the sake of the children.

When one is advised to stay and accept the abuse as a normal part of life, it becomes almost impossible for the individual concerned to take legal action against the abuser. However, in most cases, there are always people who go against the cultural grain when their conscience overrides that of society, that is, when they strongly feel that society is not doing justice. Some participants, though few, eventually left abusive relationships, counting their safety as more important than marriage preservation. To such individuals, Suda's (1996:78) advice that "there is no moral basis for anyone to

stay in a marriage which is deeply unhappy and riddled with violence,” makes a lot of sense.

Encouragement to leave abusive relationships

Only two (Christian) women reported that their friends and relatives encouraged them to leave their abusive relationships without going to the police to make a report. One of the participants (P9), who was no longer receiving financial support from her husband who had reunited with his first wife, was advised to leave the abusive marriage by her parents. The other participant (P1) received mixed messages from her parents and sisters but in general, their advice was that the marriage was detrimental to her wellbeing. Her parents, who were both Christian, felt that it was not God’s intention to let people suffer in order to preserve their marriages.

HIV as a point to consider before deciding to separate from a spouse

While not many participants referred to HIV as a critical variable to consider before one decides to leave an abusive relationship, the report by one participant (P1) gives some insight into the interface between HIV and AIDS and marital dissolution. The participant said that her parents advised her that she needed to know her HIV status before deciding to leave the marriage. They reportedly told her that if she had already contracted HIV as a result of her husband’s infidelity, there was no need to leave her abusive husband. The participant said she was tested for HIV and was found to be negative and therefore decided to abandon the marriage. The husband wanted her back but she insisted that she would not risk her life by going back to him.

7.4.3 Reporting to the authorities: making use of the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act

Six Christian participants appealed to the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act as they reported the violence they experienced to the police, with two securing protection orders against their abusers. This is a positive sign that the Act is being utilised by some women. Participants 2, 6, 10, 12, 14 and 19 made reports to the police. All of these participants, except for P6, had also shared their experiences with members of their religious communities who advised them to take further action. The participants who appealed to the law indicated that they were encouraged to do so by members of their religious communities who made it clear that God willed their peace.

In two cases the participants were encouraged by Biblical texts to seek freedom from abuse. One participant (P14) explained that when John 10 verse 10 was explained to her by a member of a women's fellowship group (*Sungano yemadzimai*) to which she belonged, she realised that Jesus had come to bring her abundant life which is the antithesis of a life of abuse and this encouraged her to seek relief through the legal system. This finding confirms Fiorenza's (1995b:132) argument that "we are able to find liberating paradigms and resources in Biblical texts." Another participant (P12) said her pastor told her that it was *not* ungodly to take issues to the police so that the law could take its course.

The reporting of abuse to the police confirms Laird's (2001:295) statement that women across the social divide are slowly getting more courageous and are "breaking the silence" about abuse, some getting protection orders and others leaving the situation.

In reporting the abuse, the cultural tradition of silence and preserving family secrets is challenged. Bannerman (2007:25) views the reporting as a life-giving subversion, by which he suggests that, while reporting is often met with societal disapproval, it can bring about liberation from abuse. Furthermore, the appeal to legal institutions by some participants seems to suggest that there is no necessary contradiction in the operation of religious and secular institutions and that the spiritual and legal solutions are complimentary. In this connection, Cooper-White (1996:13) contends that "the phenomenon of violence against women needs to be approached as much from the discipline of social and political ethics as from the field of pastoral psychology." The point is reiterated by Nason-Clark (2004:304) who states that "condemnation of domestic violence requires both the language of contemporary culture and the language of the spirit".

Of the six participants who reported to the police, four eventually separated from their abusive husbands while two reconciled with their husbands after protection orders were issued. The protection orders were revoked before their expiration upon the request of the two participants who had decided to reconcile with their partners. Although some harmony (in the case of reunited spouses) was achieved through the court system, the picture that seems to emerge is that appealing to the law is likely to result in the breakup of marriages which could explain the reluctance of those who did

not want to report the abuse to the police. Given that a few participants separated from their spouses as a result of the violence, an overwhelming majority were still in the abusive relationships, including some educated and privileged women, who were gainfully employed professionals. That the majority of abused women continued to stay in abusive relationships was also a finding of other studies (Bonate 2006:156; McMullen 2002:197; Phiri 2001:98; Ramsay 1999:46; Fortune 1984:18).

7.4.4 Not reporting to the authorities and not making use of the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act: Rationale

A majority of the participants (100% of Muslims and 72.7% of Christians) did not report the violence to the police. A number of reasons were cited by participants. The reasons could be classified as religious, socio-cultural and economic. The following responses show why most participants did not report to the police or appeal to legal institutions:

7.4.4.1 Religious reasons

'Prayer helps'

A substantial number of participants (all 8 Muslims and 16 Christians) indicated that religious reasons, among others, deterred them from reporting the abuse to the authorities. The major religious reason was that only God had the power to end the abuse by changing the abuser. Prayer was identified as the key to unlock God's intervention. The advice to pray for God's intervention was given by religious leaders and communities who advised the participants that God held answers to their problems and they were to look up to God who, they said, can do the seemingly impossible. One participant (P4) had this to say:

The pastor's wife, to whom I went for advice, said to me: "Pray for your husband and forgive him as Jesus teaches. One day he will change. Reporting him to the police will actually worsen the situation as it will only harden him."

Another participant (P8) said that she was advised to pray as prayer could change a person and make him stop the violence. Similarly, a Muslim participant (P28) showed that she trusted that prayer could solve her problem

when she said, “The solution to any problem lies with Allah who has all the power and is all-knowing.”

Both participants and those to whom they reported believed in the power of prayer. This belief rendered it inappropriate to report to authorities.

‘Suffering is expected by religious people’

It emerged that some religious people to whom the participants sought help advised them to accept suffering as a reality of living among people of faith. Eight participants (six Christian and two Muslim) reported that their religious leaders advised them to endure the suffering as it tests faith.

One participant (P18) reported that her pastor said God had a purpose in her suffering and that one day the suffering would be a thing of the past as God would intervene. Similarly, another participant (P26) said a senior Muslim woman to whom she turned for help advised that believers should expect some suffering because Satan is after leading astray those who believe. Thus it was believed suffering was brought about by Satan for the purpose of making believers abandon their faith.

This advice seems to ignore the fact that the source of the suffering was a fellow Christian. The advice to endure suffering in the hope that things will change for the better is also found within the context of African culture where abused women are advised that marriage is not easy; it needs perseverance. One has to work hard to make marriage work. The advice that one should endure suffering in the hope of God’s intervention prevented some participants from seeking help from the police. In this regard, the abused remained silent because religion taught them that it is a virtue to endure suffering. According to Fiorenza (1995b:145) advising the abused to endure suffering does not stop the suffering but rather perpetuates domestic violence. She goes on to assert that “rather than empowering the abused to leave an abusive situation, the ‘theology of suffering’ fosters violence and victimisation” (1995b:145).

Ungodly to report to non-religious authorities

Twelve participants, including six Muslims, indicated that the advice they received from their religious communities was to the effect that it would be a sign of lack of faith to report to non-religious authorities. Influenced by such a perception,

participants indicated that religious leaders were better placed to counsel religious people in situations of abuse than secular authorities. It also emerged that reporting to the police was regarded as tantamount to declaring that religion has failed which would be a threat to the integrity of the church and the *ummah*⁶⁰.

One participant (P17) reported that her pastor advised that it was ungodly for a Christian to report abuse to people who are not believers. In the same vein, another participant, a Muslim woman (P29) said that the imam discouraged her from taking legal action against her abusive husband saying that such an action was like declaring Allah irrelevant in her life.

Belief in the sanctity of marriage

For sixteen participants, the thought of reporting to the police invoked the fear of divorce, which, in both religions, was perceived as contrary to the will of the Almighty. In Islam, divorce was depicted as something detestable before Allah although it was permissible. Within the Christian religion, divorce was portrayed as never apart of God's original plan because, when a man and a woman come together in marriage, they become one flesh that should not be separated by anyone (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:9). This understanding of marriage gave some victims the power to endure suffering in silence in order to preserve their marriages and to avoid violating God's plan. In this connection, Fiorenza (1995b:145) says that abused wives "who believe that divorce is against God's will, cannot but remain in violent marriage relationships for 'better and for worse'".

The sixteen participants under review revealed that their belief in the permanence of marriage made it difficult for them to seek help from the police as this might result in divorce or separation. The participants felt that seeking relief from abusive relationships through legal means was a threat to the integrity of marriage which was meant to be permanent. In addition, three participants pointed to the sacramental nature of marriage which renders divorce unacceptable. This finding confirms McMullen's (2002:197) view that "the sacramental nature of marriage makes it difficult for abused women to leave abusive relationships". The depiction of marriage

⁶⁰ The *ummah* is the community of Muslims, locally and globally. Muslims believe that the ultimate head of the *ummah* is Allah, God himself.

as a sacrament⁶¹ in the Roman Catholic tradition means that it cannot be dissolved (Ramsay 1999:46). As such, the abused is expected to endure the suffering in the hope that things will change rather than try to seek help to get out of the abusive marriage. The belief in the sanctity of marriage was behind the advice that participants received from religious communities as well as friends and relatives.

7.4 4.2 Social/cultural reasons

Fear of social stigma

The fear of divorce and its associated stigma was a deterrent to reporting abuse as can be noted from some of the statements participants made. Nine participants revealed that they could not go to the police for fear of incurring divorce or separation that would lead to their stigmatisation as marriage failures. One participant (P13) reported that her husband threatened her with divorce if she reported to the police. In a similar vein, another participant (P18) said she avoided reporting to the police to avoid divorce which she perceived as the inevitable consequence of making domestic violence public. Thus participants' desire to avoid the disgrace associated with being a divorcee prevented them from taking advantage of the law, particularly the Domestic Violence Act.

The fear of divorce is understandable when one considers that in the Shona society, married women are regarded as more respectable than single or divorced women (Mukonyora 1999:278; Armstrong 1998:16; Kitson 1992:18). The attachment to a man in marriage earns a woman a position of good standing in the society. Because of the entrenched belief that a woman is dignified when she is in a relationship with a man, some abused women found themselves having to endure domestic abuse in a bid to save their marriages. Other studies confirm this finding (see Gonzalez 2010:87; Yigzaw et al 2010:43; Burn 2005:24; Moyo 2004a:442; Maluleke & Nadar 2002:12; Armstrong 1998:6).

Since the private domain is protected culturally from outside intervention in both Christianity and Islam, reporting to authorities is often shunned. Within the context of Islam, emphasis is placed on the need for women to keep domestic secrets (Bonate 2006:156). The stigma surrounding domestic violence is great, especially in the

⁶¹An outward sign of an inner spiritual grace. In this regard, the marriage relationship is taken to symbolise the relationship between God and the church, a sacred relationship.

church (Fortune 1984:18). Fortune further states that both victims and abusers are stigmatised as the “new lepers”. This is against the background that religious communities are assumed to be safe spaces in light of domestic violence. As such, reports of violence in religious communities would undermine this perception, hence the silence on the matter.

In an unsuspected issue, two Christian participants indicated that they were not prepared to face divorce because they were not comfortable with the idea of leaving their current sexual partners and engaging in sexual relations with other men. They felt this would be like committing adultery. As one participant (P3) said:

It is hard to imagine becoming a divorcee and getting married to another man while your first husband is still alive. It would appear you are committing adultery; you are making your body cheap.

This view is based on Jesus’ teaching that “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery” (Mark 10:11-12, RSV).

Apart from seeking to protect their own social standing, the participants also sought to protect the status of their husbands, their families, and their religious communities by not reporting to the police and so avoiding making the private public. Shame thus prevented the abused from reporting to authorities. One participant (P16) reported:

As a wife of a minister of religion, I cannot report the battering to the police as this would tarnish his reputation. People look up to my husband as a shepherd. How would they feel about him if they hear that he is violent?

The participants revealed that reporting the abuse to the police would make people look down upon them, their husbands and their religious communities. Reporting was perceived as bringing shame. It would also undermine the perception that religious communities are free from violence.

It is, therefore, clear that participants often did not report abuse in order to save themselves from stigmatisation, but they also often did not report the abuse in order to save their husbands, their families and their religious communities. The desire to maintain the dignity and reputation of everyone concerned served as a deterrent to

reporting. For people of high social standing such as ministers of religion, the need to maintain integrity is even more compelling, hence the silence on the part of the abused. Domestic violence is, for the most part, considered a private family matter that does not need public intervention and this makes it difficult for victims to access help. Making domestic violence public has the effect of tarnishing the reputation of the abuser and, in the case of prominent figures such as religious leaders, the impact could be devastating. By protecting the social standing of their abusers, the participants were also protecting their own images, given society's tendency to blame the victim.

Fear of losing children

Five participants indicated that they feared losing their children if they reported the abuse. The fear of losing children is one of the constraints women in abusive relationships face when considering leaving situations of abuse (Armstrong 1998:6; Peckover 2003:276). This fear is understandable because, within the context of African culture, children belong to the father due to the custom of *lobola* which gives the father custody of children if the parents divorce (Kambarami 2006:4; Bourdillon 1998:41).

Participants who expressed fear of divorce and the subsequent loss of custody of their children also felt that if they left their children, the children might be exposed to abuse. As one participant (P7) said:

I cannot imagine getting divorced and leaving my children behind. No one will be able to take care of them as I do. Ndinogarira vana yangu (I will stay in the marriage for the sake of my children).

The study also revealed an emergent aspect of African Traditional Religion as it relates to children. Participant 14 explained her fear for her children in terms of the husband and his family's capacity to incite their dead relatives (ancestral spirits) to cause the children to fall sick or encounter misfortune if the wife insists on having custody of children. She explained

It is difficult to seek divorce because you will be forced to leave your children; otherwise if you take them by legal assistance, those children may experience misfortune or even death caused by their paternal ancestral spirits.

In this case, fear of the spirit world becomes a deterrent for those contemplating divorce.

Fear of further violence

Some abusers threatened their victims with further abuse if they reported the matter to the police. Six participants indicated that they did not seek legal recourse for fear of reprisals from their abusive spouses. One participant (P4) said that she never thought of going to the police or lawyers for fear of further violence from her husband and revenge from her in-laws who tended to place the blame for the violence on her. Similarly, another participant (P11) said that reporting to the police could only make matters worse, given the violent nature of her husband.

What emerges from such responses is that the abuser may become even more aggressive and that in-laws may also take offence if their relative (the abusive man) is reported and prosecuted because the reporting is perceived as threatening the reputation of both the man and his family, causing the whole family, both nuclear and extended, to be stigmatised.

The finding that women who undertake legal steps to redress domestic violence are viewed negatively and are thus vulnerable to further violence, corresponds with observations made elsewhere (Ntlama 2010:194; Chireshe & Chireshe 2009:94; Mesatywa 2009:165; Amenga-Etego 2006:34-35; Hodge 2005:287; Kethusegile et al 2000:165; Ferrato 2000:48).

7.4.4.3 Economic reasons

Five participants (3 Christian and 2 Muslim) reported that they did not seek legal recourse because they felt doing so might result in divorce which might in turn mean loss of support from the husband. As one participant (P7) said:

I did not think of reporting the violence to the police because my husband looks after the family, paying fees for children and supplying material needs. If I report to the police, we would end up in divorce and I will lose the support of my husband.

In the same vein, another participant (P23) said she could not risk losing the financial support of her husband by reporting to authorities.

The picture that emerges is that some abused women stay in the abusive relationships because they do not have a sound financial basis outside the marriage union. As such, they would remain married to ensure they are supported by the abusive men. That financial dependency prevented some abused women from seeking relief from the abuse came out in other studies as well (for example, Gharaibeh & Oweis 2009:376).

7.5 ADVICE PARTICIPANTS WOULD GIVE TO OTHER ABUSED WOMEN

The majority of participants (23/30 or 76.7%) indicated that they would advise the abused to look up to God, Allah or Jesus as these had the power to transform the abusers and change the abusive situation for the better. In spite of the fact that some of the participants were still reeling under abuse, they were hopeful that their situation was going to change as a result of prayer and that they would testify of the greatness of God before others. Participants indicated that they would advise, among others, the need to persevere as sometimes God's answers were delayed (P4), the need to look up to God who has the power to transform any situation (P7), praying unceasingly in the face of domestic violence (P11) and that it is important to trust in the Almighty (P27).

Prayer remained central for most participants. They indicated that they would advise spiritual solutions in the belief that this would change the situation of abuse. This finding suggests that religious convictions were strong among the participants. The responses indicate that most participants did not see the law as having the capacity to address their problem, thus effectively rendering the Domestic Violence Act irrelevant.

While the majority of participants indicated that they would suggest spiritual solutions, a minority felt human beings had the capacity to end the abuse. To this effect, two participants said they would advise bringing the problem to members of the immediate family. One of the participants (P26) had this to say:

Reporting to relatives is advisable. This way the problem is not publicised but at the same time it can be solved amicably. This is likely to cement relationships.

Five participants indicated that they would advise appealing to the legal system, that is, reporting to the police or seeking legal assistance to leave the abusive situation. For participants who indicated that they would advise making use of the law, it was not

enough to pray and wait for divine intervention; practical solutions had to be taken. One of the participants (P10) said that if the violence escalates it is advisable to report to the police to avoid further injury.

From the preceding responses, what is apparent is that religion plays a critical role in the experiences of abused women as an overwhelming majority of participants revealed that they would advise victims to seek spiritual solutions. It should, however, be noted that five participants, who reported to the police, indicated that they would encourage victims to report to the police, and this implies taking advantage of the Domestic Violence Act.

7.6 IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT

The study has shown that, for the most part, the application of the Domestic Violence Act was perceived by participants as being at variance with cultural and religious teachings, hence its limited application. Religious, social, and economic factors made it difficult for most victims of domestic violence to report to the authorities.

Those who believed that their victimisation was fuelled by the devil, evil spirits (which were sometimes designated as evil family spirits bent on harming people) magic or saw it as a test from God, thought of spiritual solutions as appropriate interventions. In view of this, appealing to the law was perceived as an inappropriate intervention because the law did not have the capacity to offset the work of spiritual elements. Religious teachings on the nature and importance of marriage were a deterrent factor to reporting. The belief that marriage is meant to be permanent and that divorce is undesirable made it difficult for some participants to contemplate reporting the abuse to the police as the reporting might result in separation or divorce.

The fear of social stigma and shame prevented many victims from seeking legal recourse. Participants were concerned about what people would say about them, their spouses and their religious communities. As a result, they had to sacrifice their safety for the sake of society and the social dividend of dignity that comes with the status of being a married woman.

While some participants could have reported because they saw their abusive partners as being responsible for their action, they were harked down by fear of reprisals from both perpetrators and their (perpetrators') relatives. Within the context of the current study, it can be inferred that the Domestic Violence Act was largely viewed as counter-cultural, as having the propensity to further worsen the violence, hence its limited usefulness.

While the findings show that some participants took advantage of the law, it seems there is still some way to go before the majority of abused women, especially the religious, fully take advantage of the provisions of the Act. Entrenched beliefs and attitudes impede the full implementation of the law. Using the law in addressing instances of domestic violence is often viewed as being at variance with African culture, especially customary law with its values such as keeping family secrets, the primacy of the family, and the overarching norm of male dominance.

7.7 COLLUSION OF CULTURE AND RELIGION

The study revealed that culture and religion are bedfellows. The response to domestic violence was shaped by both culture and religion and this collusion contributes to the subordination and subsequent violence against women. At the end of this study one has to agree with Maluleke and Nadar (2002:14) who describe the relationship between religion, culture and gender socialisation as “the unholy alliance” as they engender domestic violence against women.

Religion shapes society as much as it is shaped by society. This mutual influence suggests that the two work together in the context of domestic violence as in other social contexts. Religious and cultural practices communicate, to members of a society, the relative status and role of men and women (Burn 2005:21). The subordination of women is religiously and culturally sanctioned. The study revealed that the status of participants, as shaped by culture and religion, engendered their vulnerability to domestic violence.

In the Shona society the conception of gender roles is so interwoven with religion that trying to separate religious values from social life is difficult. This seems to explain

the correspondence between the advice given to abused women by religious communities and that given by friends and relatives. At this juncture, it needs to be noted that some of the relatives consulted were also Christian or Muslim and that religious advisors also had influence from African culture because this is where they are rooted, as alluded in Chapter 2.

In both religion and culture the marriage institution is highly valued. Marriage is perceived as a basic social unit that the Creator instituted. Divorce is considered ungodly in both Christianity and Islam because it was instituted grudgingly-it is permissible but at the same time detestable. Within the context of African culture, marriage gives honour to a woman and divorce results in shame. This conceptualisation of marriage and divorce made it difficult for abused women to take any action that might result in divorce. This includes seeking legal recourse including making use of the Domestic Violence Act.

Religion and culture are both patriarchal, that is they are characterised by male dominance of social institutions. Men are dominant and are the heads of families. They are the managers of women. Women have a subservient position and as such they are expected to obey their husbands. When they fail to submit as expected, they find themselves vulnerable to domestic violence, a scenario that emerged from the present study.

The victim-blaming attitude of society thus emanates from religion and culture, both of which subordinate women. When women are abused by their husbands they are often accused of having provoked the men who have abused them. In this regard the abused is taken to be the offender whereas the perpetrator is taken as a victim of circumstances. This tends to sanction certain forms of violence such as wife battering. While in Islam some religious texts such as Surah 4:34 can be invoked by abusive men to justify their behaviour, in Christianity a number of texts on female subordination such as Ephesians 5:22-24 and Colossians 3:18-19 may be construed to justify domestic violence to ensure compliance on the part of the wife. In Shona traditional culture, as in Christianity and Islam, male headship is axiomatic. Cultural practices such as payment of *lobola* render women vulnerable to abuse because they give a sense of ownership to the man.

In the final analysis, participants' experiences of domestic violence and the response to such was shaped by both culture and religion. The teaching on the value of keeping family secrets, expressed in such Shona sayings such as *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* and *usafukura hapwa*, which both imply the need to keep domestic secrets, is also promoted in Christianity and Islam as can be inferred from the advice participants received from their religious leaders and other members of their religions.

It is clear that the usefulness of the Domestic Violence Act was stifled by both religion and culture. Because in Christianity and Islam as well as in African culture it is considered shameful to report domestic violence to the police and so make public private issues, the majority of participants desisted from reporting to the police or authorities.

The collusion of religion and culture is also attested in a number of writings (Bradley 2010:365; Para-Mallam 2010:464; Peckover 2003:276; Spradley & McCurdy 1997:280; Lutz 1993:206; Sweetman 1998:2). What can be noted from these writings is that female subordination is rooted in cultural regulations and divine decrees. In addition, patriarchal attitudes in culture are reinforced in both Christianity and Islam. Thus religion and culture tended to collude in the subordination of women as well as violence against them. Furthermore, religion and culture influenced how the abused responded to the violence.

In conclusion, domestic violence should be understood from the perspective of religion and culture that shape both its conceptualisation and the response to it. Any piece of legislation that is found to be at variance with religion and culture is bound to be repelled. In this light, the Domestic Violence Act (Zimbabwe 2006), which purports to alleviate the suffering of the abused, had limited utility among abused women who participated in the study because culture and religion taught the women that using the law was a threat to social stability. It needs to be noted, however, that the utilisation of the law by some participants (though few) shows some hope that the law has potential to address domestic violence and to be fully utilised.

7.8 CONCLUSION

The chapter has presented the results of the study and a number of themes have emerged. The study revealed that domestic violence, as perceived by participants, was caused by a number of factors. These include the desire to control, infidelity, *lobola*, and spiritual forces. It emerged that, in the face of domestic violence, participants reported the abuse mostly to religious communities as well as friends and relatives. These generally encouraged the abused to stay in abusive relationships although in a few cases they encouraged the abused to leave. In this regard, religious communities were both helpful and unhelpful to participants.

Some participants (though few) decided to take advantage of the law, with some finding the law helpful. Findings reveal that the law had limited utility to participants. The limited usefulness of the Domestic Violence Act was explained in terms of religious, social and economic factors. The study also revealed that a majority of participants were still staying with their abusive partners, suggesting that leaving abusive relationships was difficult for them.

The next chapter will conclude the study.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview of the study in the light of the research questions posed in Chapter 1. The chapter reviews the contextual chapters as well as the empirical process and presents a summary of the most important findings. It furthermore considers the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for further research. The chapter concludes with some final reflections on the investigation.

8.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to examine abused Christian and Muslim women's experiences of domestic violence, their own as well as their advisors' responses to the violence and the place of the Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act of 2006. Religious and cultural beliefs and practices influencing the various responses to domestic violence were central to the study. The aim was not to generalise the findings to a larger population or to generate a theory, but to add another voice and enrich the understanding of domestic violence among religious women.

This thesis consists of two parts, Part 1 (The Context) and Part 2 (The Empirical Process). Part 1 pertains to the context of the study and consists of Chapter 1 to 5, while Part 2 comprises the empirical study and is made up of the last three chapters, that is, Chapter 6 to 8.

Prior to the empirical segment, the study involved a literature survey and discussion on the status and role of women in three religions that have a bearing on the study. Results of the literature search were discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. These chapters provided the background against which the study was conducted. Chapter 2 discussed the status and role of women in African Religion and culture. An exposition of the different aspects of African Religion and culture was made in this chapter. This exposition served to provide the background of the participants, given that besides being Christian or Muslim, the participants were also members of the African Religion and culture into which they were born. Chapter 3 discussed the status and

role of women in Christianity and Chapter 4 discussed the status and role of women in Islam.

A survey of the literature on religion and domestic violence was presented in Chapter 5. This served to illuminate the problem under investigation. Literature on domestic violence in diverse religious and geographical contexts gave insights to the present study. However, most of these studies were conducted outside the borders of Zimbabwe and this study brought the discussion into the country.

8.3 REVIEW OF THE EMPIRICAL PROCESS

While reading through the literature on domestic violence, it became apparent that there was a scarcity of literature dedicated to exploring the experiences of abused Christian and Muslim women and the relevance of the law to such, especially with reference to the Zimbabwean context. The limited knowledge of this issue led to this study which was to explore it further. The research question was centred on the utilisation of the Domestic Violence Act by abused Christian and Muslim women in Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

The phenomenological approach, placed within a framework of the feminist perspective, was adopted for the study. The qualitative nature of the study made it possible to gather data on women's subjective experiences.

Data was collected from a sample of 22 Christian and 8 Muslim Zimbabwean women who had suffered domestic abuse. The participants were purposefully selected. One-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data from the participants. The interviews were guided by the interview guide (Appendix A) which was in turn constructed in light of the research questions (Chapter 1).

The phenomenological methodology was utilised in order to capture the lived experiences of the participants. It gave participants the space to freely express their experiences. The in-depth semi-structured interviews allowed participants to provide as much detail as possible on their experiences.

Data was analysed by firstly transcribing audio-recorded and noted information and then translating the information into English. For each interview, data was tabulated

according to themes that emerged. Commonalities on participants' experiences were categorised into themes and analysed. A number of findings flowed from this process.

8.4 SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the research are reported with reference to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. These questions directed the empirical investigation. The questions are as follows:

- What are the selected women's views on the role of women in their religion and to what extent have these views influenced their decisions to seek assistance?
- Where and to what extent does a select group of Christian and Muslim women who fall victim to domestic violence normally seek help?
- How do religious and cultural beliefs and practices influence the response to domestic violence by the abused as well as those to whom they report?
- To what extent do religious communities prevent selected victims of domestic violence from seeking legal assistance?
- To what extent, if at all, do selected religious women seek legal assistance for the problem?

8.4.1 What are the selected women's views on the role of women in their religion and to what extent have these views influenced their decisions to seek assistance?

In order to answer the question, it was necessary to break it up into two for a more logical presentation. The presentation starts with the perceptions of the women about women's status in their religion and then moves on to the extent to which these views influenced their decisions to seek assistance.

Perceptions of the participants about women's status in their religion

Every participant in this study claimed that religion was central to their lives – in fact that it was a life line. All the participants felt that while, on the one hand, women in their religions enjoyed equality with men, on the other hand, they were subordinate. Both Christian and Muslim participants felt that the treatment of women was characterised by both equality in some instances and discrimination in others.

Participants believed that the headship of the man was sanctioned by God and that they did not challenge this teaching. However, it was also noted that the fact that the man was head of the family was not a licence to do whatever he wanted without consulting his wife. In this regard, participants perceived marriage as a union of two people in love who needed mutual respect and mutual consultation. However, participants noted that the reality on the ground was that husbands felt that their headship meant authority to dominate their wives and this sowed seeds of domestic violence. Thus, although both Christianity and Islam advocate peace in the home and love between spouses, the emphasis on the wife's submissiveness to the husband tended to downplay partnership in marriage. The participants felt the headship of the man in itself was not abusive but that it created an environment in which a woman was regarded as the weaker party in the marriage, rendering her vulnerable to abuse.

It became clear that abusive men made use of religious scriptures and teachings to control their wives. Given this scenario, when the wives failed to comply with the demands of their husbands, they got 'punished'. A correct understanding of the ideal relationship between husband and wife was perceived, by participants, as leading to tranquillity in families but this was not always realised.

Participants felt that religious leaders, both male and female, believed that the man's role as head was not to be questioned as it was a God-given mandate. The leaders were perceived as emphasising that the wife should submit to her husband as prescribed by religious texts. As such, the religious leaders advocated a patriarchal ideology. However, the leaders were also reported to teach that it was necessary for a husband to consult with his wife when making decisions, to love and respect his wife and not to abuse her in any way. Nevertheless, the study showed that religious leaders emphasised male dominance and female submissiveness but were generally silent on mutual love and non-violence.

Although participants reported moves in the direction of equality in their religious organisations, as can be seen from the fact that more female leaders have been introduced into the organisational structures, the reality for women in their homes has not altered much.

While Muslim participants affirmed that they enjoyed equality with men in terms of their relationship towards Allah, they noted that religious leadership was the prerogative of men who served as imams or prayer leaders.

In areas such as education, employment and property rights, mixed results were noted although a majority of participants, both Christian and Muslim, indicated that their religion supported women's rights in these areas. However, the study showed that domestic abuse prevented women from enjoying some of these rights. It can be inferred that the wife's freedom to enjoy such rights are largely determined by the extent to which her spouse affords her the opportunity to do so.

In conclusion, the role of women in both Islam and Christianity was one of mixed fortunes. In some cases they enjoyed equality with their male counterparts but in others they did not. As far as domestic leadership was concerned, men were at the centre in both religions and across religious denominations. Women's status in other spheres of life was to a greater extent determined by their status in the private sphere.

The extent to which their views on the role of women have influenced the participants' decisions to seek assistance

Largely viewing themselves as subordinate and filling the role of protecting the family's integrity as taught by both African culture and the two religions to which the participants belonged, most participants sought help from their religious communities and relatives while some chose to remain silent. Given that the status of being a married woman earns a woman respect, participants' decision to seek assistance could be partly explained in terms of their need for respect. Generally they desisted from reporting to authorities, fearing that this might threaten their social standing. However, given that most of those to whom the participants reported recommended their submissiveness and the need to maintain family honour and avoid washing soiled linen in public, a few defied the advice and the prevailing customs and sought legal assistance, thus risking social disapproval.

8.4.2 Where and to what extent does a select group of Christian and Muslim women who fall victim to domestic violence normally seek help?

Consistent with the literature, this study revealed that most religious women who experienced domestic violence turned to their religious communities for help. It should, however, be noted that participants only reported the violence when it happened repeatedly and when it escalated over time. Thus, the violence experienced by the participants was not a one-off event but consisted of repeated assaults. What drove participants to report was that they found the continuing abuse no longer bearable and so reported with the view of obtaining advice and assistance. Thus silence was always the first reaction.

Participants saw their religious communities as helpful in the face of domestic violence. Within the religious communities, the most frequently consulted members were the clergy and their wives, followed by lay leaders. Reporting to religious communities signifies the importance of religion in the participants' lives. Given the centrality of religion and the attendant reporting of domestic violence to religious communities, it can be inferred that the response of the religious communities to the violence was likely to influence the course(s) of action participants took to deal with the violence.

Apart from religious communities, participants also reported to friends and relatives, some of whom were members of their religious communities. This was second in frequency of reporting. Within the African society, the extended family is crucial given that life is centred on the basis of community. This explained why participants also reported to their relatives. Relatives play a key role in the lives of individuals in both times of joy and sorrow. It should, however, be noted that the role that relatives play can be ambivalent as far as addressing the plight of victims of domestic violence is concerned. Relatives can assist victims to find solace but they can also thwart efforts to seek redress on the part of the victims of abuse. In this connection, relatives can be the solution as when they assist couples to live in harmony but they can be the cause, serving as 'invaders' (that is, disturbing the peace in a marriage).

A few participants reported to the police or authorities with a view to getting legal assistance. Those who reported to the police were either influenced by religious communities or relatives to do so. Thus, it needs to be highlighted that it had never been the first step for any of the participants to seek legal recourse. It was only after some discussions with religious leaders and relatives and friends that the abused women resorted to this course of action. The limited reporting to authorities shows limited utilisation of the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act by victims of domestic violence.

In the Zionist/Apostolic churches where prophets played a major role, these were consulted with a view to obtaining spiritual prescriptions (*miteuro*) to end the violence. The belief that spiritual factors cause domestic violence underlay the seeking of help from prophets. There is a belief, among the Shona, that disturbances in a family may be a result of evil spirits, which are often regarded as family or clan spirits (*mweya yerudzi/yemadzinza*) or witchcraft either emanating from jealous people or girlfriends who ‘turn away’ a husband’s love from his family towards themselves.

8.4.3 How do religious and cultural beliefs and practices influence the response to domestic violence by the abused as well as those to whom they report?

The findings showed that both religious and cultural factors influenced the response to domestic violence in ways that, on the one hand, encouraged participants to stay in abusive relationships and, on the other hand, encouraged speaking out about the violence and seeking legal assistance, ultimately assisting them to leave situations of domestic abuse. It is a conclusion of this study that for the most part the advice given to participants and their own internalised beliefs, made it difficult for them to take legal action against their abusers or even to consider leaving abusive relationships.

A consideration of the interconnectedness of religious and cultural beliefs showed how religious and cultural factors were at play in connection with the responses to domestic violence by both the abused and those to whom they reported.

Religious beliefs

For most Christian and Muslim participants and those to whom they reported, religion and spirituality held solutions to the problem of domestic violence. The belief that the Supreme Being (God or Allah) held solutions to domestic violence was held by both participants and their religious advisors. Prayer was perceived as the key to invoking God's intervention in the face of domestic violence. God was perceived as being omnipotent, so that with him nothing was impossible. Thus, in connection with the role of prayer, participants were advised to pray earnestly to God so that their situations would change. This in effect meant that they believed that prayer had the effect of changing the abuser by making him see the wrongness of his actions and so to desist from perpetrating further violence. The advice that prayer had the capacity to transform the abuser and dilute the influence of negative occult powers had the impact of giving hope to the abused that one day the violence would be a thing of the past.

Most participants were advised by their religious advisors to pray about their situation and they reported that they were indeed praying about it. In keeping with the advice they received and the action that they took, most participants reported that they would also advise other abused women to pray and trust that God would intervene.

The belief that suffering was to be expected by believers impacted the participants' response to domestic violence. They believed that suffering was a reality in the lives of believers and that it had as its source God or Allah who was testing their faith. This belief made the suffering more bearable. The belief that one was being tested led to the expectation of a 'pass' in the 'test' and this was achieved by holding on to one's marriage, rather than seeking to leave the abusive relationship.

The underlying conviction of those to whom participants reported was that reporting to the authorities and even making use of the law did not have the capacity to change a person. Far from it, this would make the abuser more aggressive and the life of the abused more unbearable. In addition, the belief that reporting to the authorities was an admission of failure of their faith had the effect of encouraging participants to desist from reporting to the authorities or taking legal action against their abusers. This belief was linked to the belief that God provided answers to life's problems.

Those to whom participants reported, influenced by their belief in the sanctity of marriage as prescribed by both religion and culture, advised that marriage had to be preserved as far as possible. They therefore advised participants to work towards keeping their marriages intact as divorce was undesirable before God/Allah. This advice influenced participants to stay in the abusive marriages. The marriage institution, in both Christianity and Islam, was believed, by most of the participants and their advisors, to have been instituted by God and this justified the need to preserve it. Within the Catholic Church, the perception of marriage as a sacrament suggested that it was unbreakable. Any course of action that might jeopardise the permanence of the marriage was therefore discouraged. The belief in the permanence of marriage, when held by the abused, pressured them to stay in the marriage regardless of the violence they experienced at the hands of their spouses. Implicitly, the abused may be caught up in abusive relationships for life. However, a few participants came to a point where they could no longer tolerate the abuse and so took steps to leave the situations. Although such participants believed in the divine origin of the marriage institution and that God intended that marriage should be permanent, their unbearable situation led them to reporting the abuse to authorities as well as contemplating separation from their abusers.

In summation, the study also showed that, religious communities offered spiritual solutions, encouraged them to trust in God, to pray and even to forgive their husbands while discouraging them from seeking help from the police. Influenced by religious teachings and cultural prescriptions on the role of women and the importance of marriage, most participants also believed in spiritual solutions and so desisted from seeking legal recourse.

Social/cultural factors

A number of sociocultural and psychosocial factors influenced the reaction of the abused and those to whom they reported. Among these were the belief that domestic violence against women was a result of provocation or negligence on the part of the abused women, importance of preserving marriage coupled with the fear of divorce, the need to keep family secrets (epitomised by the Shona saying *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga*), the need to protect the social standing of the abuser as well as that of the abused, the fear of losing their children, and the fear of further violence.

A victim-blaming attitude shared by some advisors explained why they advised participants to go back home and try to improve their conduct so that the violence did not recur. This unsympathetic attitude emanated from the cultural understanding that the wife was responsible for tranquillity in the home (evidenced by the Shona expression *musha mukadzi*, which suggested that the wife was a force of cohesion in the home). In this regard, the wife's behaviour was perceived as either engendering peace or incurring violence in the marital relationship. When those to whom participants reported blamed the victims for the abuse, they sent the message that the abused deserved the treatment. Once accepted by victims themselves, this reaction is likely to render them helpless. However, in an unsuspected result of the study it was found that none of the participants blamed themselves for the violence they suffered. The lack of self-blame could be explained in terms of participants' conscientisation of domestic violence, given that they were drawn from the urban area and its outskirts where the flow of information is faster compared to rural areas. Although only a few reported to legal authorities, it was clear that participants were not deterred from taking legal action by self-blame as reported in a number of previous studies. Factors other than self-blame deterred a majority of the participants from seeking legal recourse. The interesting finding that participants did not see themselves as blameworthy calls for further consideration from a psychological perspective, given that self-blame is often a psychological result of abuse.

Culturally based advice to preserve the marriage led some participants to eschew separation and divorce. The belief in the importance of marriage, coupled with the fear of social stigma which is associated with being a divorcee, influenced participants to seek solutions that would not lead to the dissolution of their marriages. The fear of divorce needs to be understood from both the cultural and religious perspectives. Within the African culture, the state of being married brings with it respect for the married woman whereas a divorced woman is stigmatised as a failure in life. Thus, participants in question desisted from reporting violence to the authorities in a bid to avoid divorce and so maintain their respectable status in society. It can therefore be concluded that women who saw their dignity and social security lying in marriage, found it difficult to leave the relationship or to think of solutions that might end up threatening their marital status.

Shame also proved to be a reason that prevented some participants from reporting the violence to authorities. This shame is associated with society's tendency to blame the victim for the abuse. In this connection, reporting the violence will result in the stigmatisation of the abuser and the abused alike. Shame was also associated with the need to keep family secrets as a way of safeguarding family integrity. Participants reported that they were advised not to publicise domestic violence by seeking legal recourse as this threatened the integrity of not only the abusers and the abused but also that of the religious communities to which they belonged. To maintain their social stature they, therefore, did not report to authorities so as to save themselves and their abusers from losing society's respect. Shame was a significant factor especially for people who enjoyed relatively high social positions; people to whom others would look up. The need to remain silent in the face of abuse was even more marked when the abuse involved members of the clergy. The abuse of a religious minister's wife by her husband was a case in point.

Fear of losing their children was an important reason why participants did not report abuse to the authorities. They felt that reporting would be tantamount to declaring the marriage was over. The participants feared that in the event that divorce or separation took place, they might be alienated from their children, something for which they were not prepared. In the Shona society children belong to their father and usually upon divorce or separation, the father has custody of the children while the woman goes away empty-handed. Although legislation, in Zimbabwe, has been amended to allow mothers under certain circumstances to have custody of their children after divorce, the reality on the ground is that mothers are often prevented, on cultural grounds, from having custody over children. The custom of *roora*, discussed at length in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4.1.2), explains why men continue to have custody over children in spite of the establishment of laws aimed at addressing gender inequality.

A further reason why participants did not report the abuse to the police was fear of further violence from their abusers. The threat of further violence is understandable from the fact that divulging the violence has the effect of threatening the abuser's social standing (integrity) in the community. Furthermore, considering that maintaining secrecy in the face of domestic abuse is considered virtuous in the Shona society (see Section 2.4.3), reporting the abuse to authorities is tantamount to making

the private public and, in so doing, threatens the reputation of both the abuser and his family. This may result in revenge from the perpetrator and disapproval from his relatives, members of the extended family.

Economic factors

Fear of losing financial support was also found to be a factor that prevented some women from reporting abuse to the authorities. They feared that if they reported the violence to the authorities, their abusive partners were likely to separate from them, leaving them without economic support.

From the foregoing, it can be noted that the response to domestic violence was shaped by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include religious convictions, fear of further violence, and shame while external factors include societal norms concerning marriage, financial issues, and concern for children.

8.4.4 To what extent do religious communities prevent selected victims of domestic violence from seeking legal assistance?

It has become abundantly clear from the earlier sections that religious teachings as well as the advice given to abused women by religious communities and their leaders had the effect of inhibiting participants from reporting the abuse to the authorities. The teachings on wifely submission, which is emphasised by both religions dealt with in this study, explained why the most common response of religious communities encouraged women to stay in abusive marriages. The limited sympathy with the abused, exhibited in instances where participants were blamed for having triggered the violence, showed the influence of the religious system which tended to emphasise the preservation of marriage. Reporting to authorities or seeking legal assistance was largely viewed as 'rebellion' on the part of the abused, hence, the advice to seek spiritual solutions, to try to be better wives and to endure the suffering, keeping in mind that God 'hates divorce' since a marriage union was meant to last a lifetime. Despite the prevalence of this advice, there were some incidences where women were encouraged by their religious leaders/communities, to take legal action against their abusers and to leave abusive situations. The conclusion of this study is therefore that although the preponderance of advice from the religious sphere was to preserve the

marriage, there were instances where religious leaders advised participants to lay charges against the abusers.

8.4.5 To what extent, if at all, do selected religious women seek legal assistance for the problem?

Findings indicate that there was limited utilisation of the Act by abused women. While religious communities were the first port of call for most abused women, these often prevented women from seeking legal assistance, opting mainly for spiritual solutions. While the utilisation of the Act was limited, it is worth noting that, at least it served as evidence that the Act is usable. The utilisation of the Act is impeded by a number of factors which have already been highlighted. Thus, although the Domestic Violence Act (Number 14 of 2006) (Zimbabwe) purports to protect victims in the case of domestic violence, large numbers of victims fail to be protected.

What can be concluded is that it is necessary to raise awareness on the dangers of domestic violence and the need to take advantage of the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act which is meant to protect victims and not primarily to punish offenders.

8.4.6 Two fascinating findings unrelated to the research questions

Two fascinating findings from this study that seem to contradict findings from previous studies are that the participants in this study never saw themselves as personally responsible for the abuse, and did not attribute the violence they experienced to the abuse of alcohol.

Contrary to the opinion held by most of those to whom they reported, and many of the other studies which show that abused women very often blame themselves or seek for the reasons for the abuse within themselves and their behaviour, none of the participants blamed themselves for the violence. The attitude of not blaming themselves might pave the way to the application of legal provisions aimed at alleviating domestic violence.

While most previous studies linked domestic violence to the abuse of alcohol on the part of the abusers, participants with abusive spouses who drank alcohol indicated that they did not view alcohol as the cause of their abuse because the abusers were abusive even in a state of being sober.

The two intriguing findings warrant future research.

8.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Some limitations of the study were noted and they will need consideration when future studies are conducted.

The researcher is aware that generalisation from the study is limited by the small sample size, sampling procedure, and geographical context. The number of participants and the sampling method may have restricted the researcher from obtaining more diverse information on abused religious women's experiences and the utility of the Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act by such women. Since the findings of this study are based on a sample of abused Christian and Muslim women, belonging to the Shona ethnic group in Zimbabwe, it may not be representative of all Christian and Muslim women as well as non-Christian and non-Muslim women in Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, narratives were collected from abused women excluding stakeholders such as perpetrators of the abuse and those people to whom the abused turned for help and children of the abused. Getting information from these other stakeholders could be more enlightening.

The current study focused only on 30 abused Christian and Muslim women who were in a heterosexual relationship. Thus, it focused only on the female perspective of domestic violence, overlooking the male perspective which, if included, could be more enriching.

Compared to the number (22) of Christian participants, the number (8) of Muslim women was too small. This compromised the comparability of the two groups of women.

The interviews were conducted in Shona, transcribed and then translated and reported in English. This may have given rise to some distortion. To maximise accuracy of translation, the researcher consulted with academic colleagues in order to verify some of the idiomatic translations. In a few cases the statements were recorded in Shona and provided with the English translation in brackets.

8.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

In spite of the limitations identified, the researcher strongly believes the findings of this study will contribute to a body of knowledge on domestic violence among religious people. Being fully aware that no single study can do justice to the perceptions and experiences of many individuals who are abused, the researcher believes that the study has enriched the understanding of domestic violence among people of faith in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. The findings enrich the understanding of the intersection of domestic violence with religious and cultural beliefs and practices. Although the sample was limited to African, Shona-speaking women belonging to Christianity and Islam and residing in or on the outskirts of urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe, the findings are based on real women who went through the ordeal and this makes the findings particularly relevant.

Results lend support to feminist theory- that male dominance is related to domestic violence. Feminist activists of both a social and a political orientation could benefit from this study in their collective efforts to combat domestic violence in Zimbabwe.

The study may serve as a baseline for more comprehensive studies in the future. This work has provided literature useful for further research.

8.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

8.7.1 Recommendations for practice

Campaigns to raise awareness of the sources of domestic violence in schools, churches and mosques would go a long way in changing societal attitudes. Community-specific intervention programmes presented by the Ministry of Gender

and Women's Affairs to address domestic violence will prepare women for taking action in cases of abuse.

In addition, the wide dissemination of information on domestic violence and the different recourses available to women would prepare women and those who they report to, to find effective solutions to the problem.

Furthermore, the incorporation of available information on domestic violence into courses on gender and religion will raise the awareness of both abused women and those who advise them. The impact of the advice given will be more supportive and constructive to their well-being.

Finally, if relevant stakeholders and players (both religious and non-religious) could jointly work together to address domestic violence, the plight of the abused would be alleviated.

8.7.2 Recommendations for further study

Further research on a wider geographical area and with a more diverse sample needs to be done to include participants outside the Shona ethnic group, and coming from different parts of the country, representing different provinces. In addition, participants from religions other than Christianity and Islam should be involved. In this regard, the diversity in religious groupings would then become the key variable of investigation.

Secondly, participants in this study did not blame themselves for the violence or attribute their abuse to the consumption of alcohol by their abusers, contrary to what many studies show. These contradictions are issues that need further investigation.

The third recommendation is that the Muslim response should be explored in more depth since eight participants were too few and therefore not comparable to the number of Christian women who participated in the study.

Furthermore, since the family is an important social unit in which individuals find themselves, further research involving different family members should be undertaken to enhance an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence, marriage and religion.

Finally, as this study focused only on the female perspective of domestic violence, it is suggested that further research, considering both the male and the female perspective, be conducted. It could be pertinent to gather information on domestic violence from both partners, where possible or at least both males and females living close to one another, that is, living in the same geographical area.

8.8 FINAL REFLECTIONS

The research questions have been posed and answered and all that is left for me to do is to express my gratitude to the women who have participated in this study. Their willingness to share their painful and deeply personal experiences with me made it possible to obtain information on their hopes and suffering. This has provided insight into some of the pertinent issues that these women grappled with as they faced domestic violence. That these women identified themselves as abused in a society that is quick to blame victims, was a courageous act for which I admire them greatly.

Throughout my journey as a researcher, from the conception of the problem to its conclusion, I was constantly challenged by what I deem to be a very worthwhile task. I was privileged to interact with 30 unique individuals who allowed me to enter into their personal lives and share their experiences. I have found the experience an emotional and challenging task. While conceding that domestic violence is a complex phenomenon that cries out for much further investigation, I would like to note that this study has enriched my experience and broadened my understanding of life. My hope is that readers will find this thesis useful.

REFERENCES

- Abugideiri, SE 2005. A perspective on domestic violence in the Muslim community [online]. Available from: <http://www.peacefulfamilies.org/APiDVBibliography.pdf> [Accessed 15 July 2010].
- Addai, I 2000. Religious affiliation and sexual initiation among Ghanaian women. *Review of Religious Research* 44 (3): 328-343.
- Afshar, H 1998. *Islam and feminisms: An Iranian case study*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Ahmadi, F 2006. Islamic feminism in Iran: Feminism in a new Islamic context. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 22 (2): 33-53.
- Ahmed, L 1992. *Women and gender in Islam: Historical roots of a modern debate*. New Haven: Conn.
- Akinpelu, JA 1988. *An introduction to philosophy of education*. London: Macmillan.
- Akrong, AA 2005. The Reformed Tradition confronting violence in the African society. *Christian Faith and Violence* 1: 106-121.
- Al- Faruqi, LL 2008. Islamic traditions and the feminist movement: Confrontation or cooperation? [online]. Available from: [www.http://islam101.net/112-islamic-traditions-and-the-feminist-movement.html](http://islam101.net/112-islamic-traditions-and-the-feminist-movement.html) [Accessed 17 February 2011].
- Alelhie, V 2011. *A comparative analysis of intimate partner violence using an ecological framework*. Doctoral thesis: University of Texas at San Antonio, USA.
- Al-Faruqi, L 1988. *Women, Muslim society and Islam*. Indianapolis: American Trust Publications.
- Al-Hibri, AY 1999. Muslim women's rights in the global village: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Law and Religion* 15 (1): 101-127.
- _____ 2000. Deconstructing patriarchal jurisprudence in Islamic law: A faithful approach, in AK Wing (ed), *Global critical race feminism: An international reader*. New York & London: New York University Press.
- Ali, I 2010. Holy Quran and human rights of women in Islam with the comparative study of Indian constitution: An overview, in R Bandyopadhyay, K Singh, RD Dubey & S. Mandal (eds), *Women rights, human rights*. Kolkata: R. Cambray & Company Private Limited.
- Amenga-Etego, RM 2006. Violence against women in contemporary Ghanaian society. *Theology and Sexuality* 13 (1): 23-46.
- American Muslim Woman's Association Association[Sa]. Current Issues: Access to education [online]. Available from:

- <http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/currentissues/accesstoeducation/> [Accessed 15 July 2011].
- Amoah, E 2007. Reflections on the impact of the “teaching for change” conference. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 23 (2): 95-98.
- Anon, [Sa] *Childline Zimbabwe* [online]. Available from: <http://www.crin.org/organisations/vieworg.asp?id=3954> [Accessed 15 October 2012].
- Ansari, FR 2000. *Islam to the modern mind: Lectures in South Africa 1970-1972*. Paarl: Hidden Treasure Press.
- Ariarajah, SW 2002. Religion and violence: A Protestant Christian perspective. *Dialogue* 29: 58-69.
- Armstrong, A 1998. *Culture and choice: Lessons from survivors of gender violence in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Violence against women in Zimbabwe Research Project.
- Arokach, A 2006. How abused women cope with loneliness. *Social Indicators Research* 78 (2): 327-340.
- Artz, LM 1999. *Violence against women in rural Southern Cape: Exploring access to justice within a feminist jurisprudence framework*. Master’s thesis: University of Cape Town, South Africa.
- Aspers, P 2004. *Empirical phenomenology: An approach to qualitative research* [online]. Available from: <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/methodologyInstitute/pdf/QualPapers/Aspers-Patrik-Phenomenology04.pdf> [Accessed 08 August 2011].
- _____. 2009. Empirical phenomenology: A qualitative research approach (The Cologne Seminars). *The Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* 9 (2): 1-12.
- Atakav, AE 2007. Mona Lisa and veil: Cultural identity, politics, religion and feminism in Turkey. *Feminist Theology* 16 (1): 11-20.
- Babie, E 2004. *The Practice of Social Research*. Boston: Thomson.
- Badawi, JA 1980. *The status of women in Islam* [online]. Available from: http://www.sultan.org/books/the_status_of_woman_in_islam.pdf [Accessed 13 February 2010].
- Badawi, L 1994. Islam, in J Holm & J Bowker (eds), *Women in religion*. London & New York: Pinter Publishers.
- Baden, S 1992. *The position of women in Islamic countries: Possibilities, constraints and strategies for change*. A report prepared for the Special Programme WID Netherlands: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS), BRIDGE development-gender, 4: 1-42.
- Badran, M 2001. Understanding Islam, Islamism and Islamic feminism. *Journal of Women’s History* 13 (1): 44-52.

- Banana, CS 1993. The case for a new Bible, in I Mukonyora, JL Cox & FJ Verstraelen (eds). *“Rewriting” the Bible: The real issues-Perspectives from within Biblical and Religious Studies in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Banister, P, Burman, E, Parker, I, Taylor, M & Tindall, C 1994. *Qualitative methods in Psychology: A research guide*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bannerman, DH 2007. *The subversion of patriarchy: Exploring pastoral care with men in the church of the Province of South Africa on the East Rand*. Master’s thesis: University of South Africa.
- Barakat, BA & Krohn, S 2005. *Gender equality and Islam: Promoting women’s human rights through religion*. *Deutsche Gesellschaftur* [online]. Available from: <http://www.gtz.de/women-law> [Accessed 15 November 2010].
- Barazangi, NH 2004. *Muslim women’s education: Between East and West* [online]. Available from: <http://www.eselflearning-arabic.cornell.edu/publications/NHB> [Accessed 15 April 2011].
- Battaglia, LJ 2001. Conservative protestant ideology and wife abuse: Reflectors on the discrepancy between theory and data. *Journal of Religion and Abuse* 2 (4): 6-18.
- Baxter, P & Jack, S 2008. Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report* 13 (4): 544-559.
- Beaulaurier, RL, Seff, LR, Newman, FL & Dunlop, B 2007. External barriers to help seeking for women who experience intimate partner violence. *Journal of Family Violence* 22: 747-755.
- Beavis, MA 2007. Christian origins, egalitarianism, and utopia. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 23 (2): 27-49.
- Berg, BL 2004. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*, 5th ed. San Francisco: Pearson Publishing.
- Best, JW & Khan, JV 2006. *Research in education*, 10th ed. Boston & New York: Pearson Education.
- Bible. New Revised Standard Version 1995.
- Binford-Weaver, RV 2005. *Factors that influence seminary student response to women victims of domestic violence: An empirical investigation*. Doctoral thesis: University of South Carolina, USA.
- Blake, R 2011. *Experiences of abused African American women who utilised faith-based resources*. Doctoral thesis: Walden University, USA.
- Bohn, C R 1989. Dominion to rule: The roots and consequences of a theology of ownership, in JC Brown & CR Bohn (eds). *Christianity, patriarchy and abuse*. Seattle: The Pilgrim Press.

- Bollen, S, Artz, L, Vetten, L & Louw, A 1999. *Violence against women in Metropolitan South Africa: A study on impact and service delivery*. Monograph 41, September 1999.
- Bonate, LJK 2006. Matriliney, Islam and gender in Northern Mozambique. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36 (2): 139-166.
- Borrowdale, A 1991. *Distorted images: Christian attitudes to women, men and sex*. London: SPCK.
- Bourdillon, MFC 1973. Traditional religion in Shona society, in AJ Dachs (ed), *Christianity South of the Zambezi*, Volume 1. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- _____ 1993. *Where are the ancestors? Changing culture in Zimbabwe*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.
- _____ 1998. *The Shona peoples: An ethnography of the contemporary Shona, with special reference to their religion*, 3rd ed. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Bowman, CG 2003. Theories of domestic violence in the African context. *Journal of Gender, Social Policy and the Law* 11 (2): 847-863.
- Brade, KA 2009. *Let the church stop saying "Amen". Domestic violence perceptions and experiences from a cohort of African American clergy in Divinity School*. Doctoral thesis: Howard University, USA.
- Bradley, T 2010. Religion as a bridge between theory and practice in work on domestic violence against women in Rajasthan. *Journal of Gender Studies* 19 (4): 361-375.
- Broderick, P 2007. Domestic violence and faith. *Faith and Community Ministries* 21 (1): 41-43.
- Brown, D 2004. *A new introduction to Islam*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Brunskell, H 1998. Feminist methodology, in C Seale (ed), *Researching society and culture*. London: Sage Publications.
- Burman, E, Smailes, SL & Chantler, K 2004. 'Culture' as a barrier to service provision and delivery: Domestic violence services for minoritised women. *Critical Social Policy* 24: 332-357.
- Burn, SM 2005. *Women across cultures: A global perspective*, 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Callaway, B & Creevey, L 1994. *The heritage of Islam: Women, religion and politics in West Africa*. Colorada: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Campbell, R & Wasco, SM 2000. Feminist approaches to social science: Epistemological and methodological tenets. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28 (6): 773-796.

- Carlson, B 1991. Domestic violence, in A Gitterman (ed), *Handbook of social work practice with vulnerable populations*. New York: Columbia Press.
- Chakkalakal, P 2007. Law and religion: A feminist biblical theological critique. *Journal of Dharma* 32 (3): 241-255.
- Chalfant, HP & LaBeff, E 1988. *Understanding people and social life: Introduction to Sociology*. New York: West Publishing Company.
- Charmaz, K 2006. *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- Chavunduka, GL 1994. *Traditional medicine in Zimbabwe*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.
- Chetty, D 2005. Towards a *mudzimu* hermeneutic: A Basuto reading of the 'Strange Woman' in the Post-Exilic texts. *Alteration: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa* 2: 199-223.
- Chirawu, S 2006. *Till death do us part: Marriage, HIV/AIDS and the Law in Zimbabwe* [online]. Available from: <http://lawbepress.com/expresso/eps/1419> [Accessed 31 January 2008].
- Chireshe, R & Chireshe, E 2009. Sexual harassment of female students in three selected high schools in urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe. *Agenda* 80: 88-96.
- Chireshe, E & Chireshe, R 2010. *Lobola*: The perceptions of Great Zimbabwe University students. *Journal of Pan-African Studies* 3 (9): 211-221.
- _____ 2011. Monogamous marriage in Zimbabwe: An insurance against HIV and AIDS? *Agenda* 25 (1): 93-101.
- Chitando, E 2004. 'The good wife': A phenomenological re-reading of Proverbs 31:10-31 in the content of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe. *Scriptura* 86: 151-159.
- Choi, YJ 2011. *Determinants of clergy behaviours promoting safety of battered Korean immigrant women*. Doctoral thesis: Virginia Commonwealth University, USA.
- Claassens, LJM 2008. Expanding our vocabulary for God: Female metaphors for God in Deutero-Isaiah. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 49 (3 & 4): 49-59.
- Clague, J 2008. Women re-imagining religions. *Feminist Theology* 16 (3): 287-289.
- Clowes, L, Sandy, L & Ratele, K 2010. Risk and protective factors to male interpersonal violence: Views of some male university students: research and theory. *African Safety Promotion* 8 (1): 1-19.
- Cohen, L, Manion, L & Morrison, K 2001. *Research methods in education*, 5th ed. London: Routledge Falmer.

- Commission on Human Rights. 2002. Working paper for Geneva-based NGO Committee on freedom of religion or beliefs and NGO on the status of women [online]. Available from: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/victims/Res_2002_35.pdf [Accessed 13 April 2011].
- Connell, RW 1995. *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Constable, P 2007. For some Muslim wives, abuses know no borders; traditional pressures can persist in US. *Washington Post*, Tuesday May 8 [online]. Available from: www.dyn/content/article/2007/05/07/AR2007050701936html?hpid+topnews [Accessed 20 July 2010].
- Cooke, M. 2008. Roundtable discussion: Religion, gender and the Muslimwomen-Deploying the Muslimwomen. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24 (1): 91-119.
- Cooper-White, P. 1996. An emperor without clothes: The church's views about the treatment of domestic violence. *Pastoral Psychology* 45 (1):3-20.
- Cox, JL 1996. *Expressing the Sacred: An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications.
- Copeland-Linder, N 2006. Stress among black women in a South African township: The protective role of religion. *Journal of Community Psychology* 34 (5): 577-599.
- Crabtree, B & Miller, W (eds.) 1999. *Doing qualitative research*, 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Creswell JW 1998. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. London: Sage.
- Davary, B 2009. Miss Elsa and the veil: Honor, shame, and identity negotiation. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25 (2): 47-66.
- De Lange, F 2006. Sex, gender and family: The Christian contribution to an ethic of intimate relationships. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 46: 78 - 89.
- Denzin, NK & Lincoln, YS (eds) 2000. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Desai, S 2005. HIV and domestic violence: Intersections in the lives of married women in India. *Health and Human Rights* 8 (2): 140-168.
- Devine, J & Deneulin, S 2011. Negotiating religion in everyday life: A critical exploration of the relationship between religion, choices and behaviour. *Culture and Religion* 12 (1): 59-76.
- DeVos, AS 2005. Qualitative data analysis and interpretation, in AS De Vos, H Strydom, CB Fouché & CSL Delpoort (eds), *Research at grassroots: for the*

Social Sciences and Human Service Professions, 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

De Vos, AS, Strydom, H, Fouché, CB & Delport, CSL 2005. *Research at grassroots for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*, 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Dobash, RE & Dobash, RP 1979. *Violence against wives: A case against the patriarchy*. New York: Free Press.

Dobash, RP & Dobash, RE 1981. Community response to violence against wives: Charivari, abstract justice and patriarchy. *Social Problems* 28 (5): 563-581.

Doi, ARI [Sa] *Women in the Quran and the Sunnah* [online]. Available from: http://www.islamswomen.com/articles/women_in_quran_and_sunnah.php [Accessed 11 July 2011].

Duley, LA 2012. *A qualitative phenomenological study of the lived experiences of women remaining in abusive relationships*. Doctoral thesis: North Central University, USA.

Dunaway, M 2002. *The need for control in interpersonal relationships and courtship violence*. Master's thesis: East Tennessee State University, USA.

Duran, J 1993. The intersection of pragmatism and feminism. *Hypatia* 8 (2): 159-171.

Durfee, A 2011. "I'm not a victim, she's an abuser": Masculinity, victimisation, and protection orders. *Gender and Society* 25 (3): 316-334.

Durham, A 2003. *Young men surviving child sexual abuse: Research stories and lessons for therapeutic practice*. London: John Wiley & Sons.

Dyer, J 2010. Challenging assumptions: Clergy perspectives and practices regarding intimate partner violence. *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 29: 33-48.

Ebere, C 2011. Beating the masculinity game: Evidence from African Traditional Religion. *Cross Currents* December: 480-495.

Edwards, R 1990. Connecting method and epistemology: A woman interviewing women. *Women Studies International Forum* 13 (5): 477-490.

Ellece, SE 2011. 'Be a fool like me': Gender construction in the marriage advice ceremony in Botswana: A critical discouragement analysis. *Agenda* 25 (1): 43-52.

Ellison, CG, Trinitapoli, JA, Anderson, KL & Johnson, BR 2007. Race/ethnicity, religious involvement, and domestic violence. *Violence Against Women* 13 (11): 1094-1112.

Engels, D 1989. The limits of gender ideology: Bengali women, the colonial state, and the private sphere, 1890-1930. *Women's Studies Forum* 12 (4): 425-437.

- Engineer, AA 1992. *The rights of women in Islam*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Ernst, CW 2004. *Rethinking Islam in the contemporary world*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Esposito, JL 1991. *Islam: The straight path*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Farley, MA 1985. Feminist consciousness and the interpretation of scripture, in LM Russell (ed), *Feminist interpretation of the Bible*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Fernea, EW 2000. Islamic feminism finds a voice: Women's movement is discovering its roots in Islam, not in imitating Western feminists [online]. Available from: <http://www.crescentlife.com.htm> [Accessed 10 January 2009].
- Ferraro, KJ & Johnson, JM 1983. How women experience battering: The process of victimisation. *Social Problems* 30 (3): 325-339.
- Ferrato, D 2000. *Living with the enemy*. New York: Aperture Foundation.
- Fiorenza, ES 1985. The will to choose or to reject: Continuing our critical work, in LM Russell (ed), *Feminist interpretation of the Bible*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- _____ 1995a. *Bread not stone: The challenge of feminist biblical interpretation*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- _____ 1995b. Ties that bind: Domestic violence against women. *EATWOT women theologians on violence against women* 18 (1): 122-167.
- _____ 2005. Feminist studies in religion and theology in between nationalism and globalization. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21 (1): 111-119.
- Flinck, A, Paavilainen, E & Asredt-Kurki, P 2005. Survival of intimate partner violence as experienced by women. *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 14 (3): 383-393.
- Foley, R 2004. Muslim women's challenges to Islamic Law: The case of Malaysia. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6 (1): 53-84.
- Fortune, MM & Enger, CG 2005. Violence against women and the role of religion [online]. Available from: <http://www.vawnet.org> [Accessed 21 June 2011].
- Fortune, MM 1984. The church and domestic violence. *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin* 8 (2): 17-20.
- Fouché, CB 2005. Qualitative research designs, in AS De Vos, H Strydom, CB Fouché & CSL Delport (eds), *Research at grassroots: for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*, 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

- Francisco, LV 2010. *The synergy between intimate partner violence and HIV: Baseline findings from the SASA! Study, a cluster randomized community trial in Kampala, Uganda*. Doctoral thesis: Johns Hopkins University, USA.
- Fuchs, E 2008. Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible for women: The neoliberal turn in contemporary feminist scholarship. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 24 (2): 45-65.
- Gelfand, M 1999. *The genuine Shona: Survival values of an African culture*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Getecha, C & Chipika, J 1995. *Zimbabwe women's voices*. Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network.
- Gharaibeh, M & Oweis, A 2009. Why do Jordanian women stay in abusive relationships: Implications for health and social well-being. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 41 (4): 376-384.
- Gichaara, J 2008. Women, religio-cultural factors and HIV/AIDS in Africa. *Black Theology* 6 (2): 188-199.
- Gilbert, N 2011. *Understanding African American clergies' experiences with incidents of domestic violence among female congregants*. Doctoral thesis: Capella University, USA.
- Gillum, TL 2009. The intersection of spirituality, religion and intimate partner violence in the African American community, *Institute of Domestic Violence in the African American Community, University of Minnesota* [online]. Available from: www.idvaac.org. [Accessed 17 February 2011].
- Gnadadason, A 2006. "We have spoken so long O God: When will we be heard?" Theological reflections on overcoming violence against women. *Theology and Sexuality* 13 (1): 9-22.
- Gnanadason, A, Kanyoro, M & McSpadden, LA 1996. *Women, violence and non-violent change*. Uppsala: WCC Publishers.
- Goetting, A 1999. *Getting out: Life stories of women who left abusive men*. New York: Columbia Press.
- Golafshani, W 2003. Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research: *The Qualitative Report* 8 (4): 597-607.
- Gonzalez, J 2010. *The battered woman experience: A phenomenological study exploring the lives of Latina women and their experience of domestic violence*. Doctoral thesis: University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
- Gopal, G & Salim, M (eds) 1998. *Gender and law: East Africa speaks*. Washington, D. C: The World Bank.

- Greef, M 2005. Information collection: interviewing. in AS De Vos, H Strydom, CB Fouché & CSL Delpont (eds), *Research at grassroots: for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*, 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Greyvenstein, LA 1996. Women: The secondary species in education? *South African Journal of Education* 16 (2): 75-80.
- Gurin, P 1985. Women's gender consciousness. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49 (2): 143-163.
- Gustafon, AL 2005. *Seminarians' response to domestic violence: Sex-role attitudes, just world beliefs and formal training*. Doctoral thesis: Alliant International University, USA.
- Hackett, RIJ 1995. Women and new religious movements in Africa, in U King (ed), *Religion and gender*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Haddad, B 2006. Living it out: Faith resources and sites as critical to participatory learning with rural South African women. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 22 (1): 135-154.
- Hajjar, L 2004. Religion, state power, and domestic violence in Muslim Societies: A framework for comparative analysis. *Law and Social Inquiry* 1-38.
- Hallstein, DLO 1999. A postmodern caring: Feminist standpoint theories, revisioned caring and communication ethics. *Western Journal of Communication* 63 (1): 32-56.
- Hamilton, L, Geist, C & Powell, B 2011. Marital name change as a window into gender attitudes. *Gender and Society* 25 (2): 145-175.
- Hampson, D 1990. *Theology and feminism: Signposts in theology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Hampton, RL, Vandergriff-Avery, M & Kim, J 1999. Understanding the origins and incidents of spousal violence in North America, in TP Gullotta & SJ McElhaney (eds), *Violence in homes and communities: Prevention, intervention and treatment* (Vol 11). London: Sage.
- Harding, S (ed) 1987. *Feminism and methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hartsock, NCM 1998. *The feminist standpoint revisited and other essays revisited*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Hashmi, SH 2010. The rights of Muslim women: A comment on Irene Oh's 'The Rights of God.' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 38 (3): 588-593.
- Hatendi, RP 1973. Shona marriage and the Christian churches, in AJ Dachs (ed), *Christianity South of the Zambezi*, Volume 1. Gweru: Mambo Press.

- Hawkins, S 2011. Who wears the hijab with the president?: Constructing a modern Islam in Tunisia. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 41 (1): 35-58.
- Hellum, A & Stewart, J 1999. *Women's human rights and legal pluralism in Africa: Mixed norms and identities in fertility management in Zimbabwe*. Ascheoug: Mond Books.
- Hendricks, SS 1998. Authority and the abuse of power in Muslim marriages- Paper presented at the Women's Conference of the 2nd International Islamic Unity Conference in Washington DC 8 August 1998, Omni Shoreham Hotel, Blue Room.
- Hendriks, HJ & Rutoro, R 2008. Attitudes towards women in leadership structures in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal* 49 (1/2): 40-52.
- Hidayatullah, A 2009. Inspiration and struggle: Muslim feminist theology and the work of Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25 (1): 162-170.
- Hodge, DR 2005. Spirituality. *Families in Society* 86 (2): 287-296.
- Holmes, KA 2004. *Domestic violence and religious beliefs*. A Masters thesis: California State University, USA.
- Holstein, JA & Gubrium, JF 1995. *The active interview*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Hooks, B 2000. *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. Cambridge: South End Press.
- Horne, SG & Levitt, HM 2003. Shelter from the raging wind: Religious needs of victims of intimate partner violence and faith leaders' responses. *Journal of Religion and Abuse* 5 (2): 83-98.
- Horton, BP & Hunt, CL 1984. *Sociology*, 6th ed. Auckland: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Isichei, E 1995. *A history of Christianity in Africa: From antiquity to the present*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
- Jeenah, N 2004. Muslim women cultures and movements in Sub-Saharan Africa [online]. Available from: <http://naeemjeenah.shams.za.org>[Accessed 11 August 2010].
- Jewett, PK 1983. *Man as male and female: A study in sexual relationships from a theological point of view*. USA: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Jewkes, R, Levin, J & Penn-Kekana, L 2002. Risk factors for domestic violence: Findings from a South African cross-sectional study. *Social Science Medicine* 55 (9): 1603-1617.

- Johnson, MA 2008. *A typology of domestic violence: Intimate terrorism, violent resistance and situational couple violence*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Johnson, MP 1995. Patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence: Two forms of violence against women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57: 283-295.
- Jones, CA 2002. Feminist research in the sociology of religion, in Sharma A (ed), *Methodology in Religious Studies: The interface with women's studies*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Joubert-Wallis, M 2008. *The contribution of culture to the spread of HIV*. Master's thesis: University of South Africa.
- Kadlec, A 2006. Reconstructing Dewey: The philosophy of critical pragmatism. *Polity* 38 (4): 519-542.
- Kalu, OU 2003. Safiyya and Adamah: Punishing adultery with shariah stones in twenty-first century Nigeria. *African Affairs* 102: 389-408.
- Kambarami, M 2006. *Femininity, sexuality and culture: Patriarchy and female subordination in Zimbabwe* [online]. Available from: <http://www.arsrc.org/downloads/uhsss/kmabarami.pdf> [Accessed 19 February 2010].
- Kanyoro, M 1999. My grandmother would approve: Engendering gospel and culture. *Feminist Theology* 7 (20): 53-70.
- Kesselman, A, McNair, LD & Schniedewind, N 2003. *Women images and realities: A multicultural anthology*, 3rd ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Kethusegile, BM, Kwaramba, A & Lopi, B 2000. *Beyond inequalities: Women in Southern Africa*. Harare: Southern African Research and Documentation Centre.
- Khan, IFR 2006. A Muslim response to domestic violence. *Journal of Religion and Abuse* 8 (1): 79-82.
- Kimani, M 2008. Women in North Africa secure more rights. *Africa Renewal*. 22 (2): 8-14 [online]. Available from: www.un.org/africarenewal.com [Accessed 11 April 2009].
- King, A 2009. Islam, women and violence. *Feminist Theology* 17 (3): 292-328.
- Kinsley, D 2002. Women's studies in the history of religions, in A Sharma (ed), *Methodology in Religious Studies: The interface with women's studies*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Kirk, G & Okazawa-Rey, M 2003. *Women's lives: Multicultural perspectives*, 3rd ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Kitson, GC 1992. *Portrait of divorce*. New York: Guilford.

- Knickmeyer, N 2004. *The bruised reed, she will not break: An investigation of the relationship between religion and experiences of domestic violence in the lives of Christian battered women*. Doctoral thesis: University of Memphis, USA.
- Knickmeyer, N, Levitt, HM, & Horne, SG 2010. Putting on Sunday best: The silencing of battered women within Christian faith communities. *Feminism and Psychology* 20 (1): 94-113.
- Knickmeyer, N, Levitt, HM, Horne, SG & Bayer, G 2003. Responding to mixed messages and double binds: Religious-oriented coping strategies of Christian battered women. *Journal of Religion and Abuse* 5 (2): 29-53.
- Ko, AH 2007. *Views of domestic violence among clergy at Chinese churches in Southern California*. Master's thesis: California State University, USA.
- Koenig, MA, Ahmed, S, Hossain, MB. & Mozumder, KA 2003. Women's status and domestic violence in rural Bangladesh: Individual- and community-level effects. *Demography* 40 (2): 269-288.
- Kort, A 2005. Dar al-Cyber Islam: Women, domestic violence, and the Islamic Reformation on the World Wide Web. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 25 (3): 363-383.
- Kosomo, D 2010. The role of women in the church in Africa. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 2 (6): 126-139.
- Kulwicki, A, Aswad, B, Carmona, T & Ballout, S 2010. Barriers in the utilisation of domestic violence services among Arab immigrant women: Perceptions of professionals, service providers and community leaders. *Journal of Family Violence* 25: 727-735.
- Labidi-Maiza, M 2006. My father's heir: The journey of a Muslim feminist, in H Haker, S Ross & MT Waker (eds), *Women's voices in world religions*. London: SCM Press.
- Laird, J 2001. Changing women's narrative: Taking back the discourse, in KJ Peterson & AA Leibermann (eds), *Building on women's strengths*. London: Haworth Press.
- Lalthapersad-Pillay, P 2009. Infected and affected: What the HIV/AIDS epidemic entails for girls and women in Africa. *Africa Insight* 39 (2): 13-25.
- Lappen, AE 2007. *The neglected side of domestic violence research: Case studies of female aggressors in intimate partnerships*. Doctoral thesis: University of Southern California, USA.
- Lather, P 1991. *Feminist research in education: Within/against*. Geelong: Deakin University Press.
- Lester, S 1999. An introduction to phenomenological research [online]. Available from: www.sid.demon.co.uk/resmethy.pdf [Accessed 16 February 2011].

- Levitt, HM & Ware, KN 2006a. Religious leaders' perspectives on marriage, divorce, and intimate partner violence. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 30: 212-222.
- _____ 2006b. "Anything with two heads is a monster": Religious leaders' perspectives on marital equality and domestic violence. *Violence Against Women* 12 (1/2): 1169-1190.
- Levitt, HM, Swanger, RT & Butler, JB 2008. Male perpetrators' perspectives on intimate partner violence, religion and masculinity. *Sex Roles* 58: 435-448.
- Lipinge, EM & Lebeau, D 2005. *Beyond inequalities: Women in Namibia*. Windhoek: University of Namibia and Southern African Research and Documentation Centre.
- Lockette, DD 2012. *The role religion plays in Christian women's decisions to remain or leave an abusive relationship*. Doctoral thesis: Capella University, USA.
- Lutenbacher, M, Cohen, A & Mitzel, J 2003. Do we really help? Perspectives of abused women. *Public Health Nursing* 20 (1): 56-64.
- Lutz, E 1993. The position of women in our society, in M Berer & P Sunanda (eds), *Women and HIV/AIDS: An international resource book*. London: Pandora Press.
- Mabasa, LF 2002. *The psychological impact of infertility on African women and their families*. Doctoral thesis: University of South Africa.
- Mabena, L 2002. *Exploration of factors contributing to abuse in Black South African women*. Master's thesis: University of South Africa.
- Mace, ER 2009. Feminist forerunners and a usable past: A historiography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible*. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25 (2): 5-23.
- Macey, M 1998. Religion, male violence and the control of women, in C Sweetman (ed), *Gender, religion and spirituality*. Oxford: Oxfam.
- Macionis, JJ 1997. *Sociology*, 6th ed. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Maclachlan, M 1997. *Culture and health*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
- Madraiwiwi, RJ 2003. Domestic violence and the law. *Pacific Journal of Theology* 30: 46-48.
- Madu, SN, Ndom, RJE & Ramashia, CL 2010. Depression among female survivors of domestic violence in Thohoyandou, South Africa. *Gender and Behaviour* 8 (1): 2871-2885.
- Makahamadze, T, Isacco, A & Chireshe, E 2011. Examining perceptions of Zimbabwean women about the Domestic Violence Act. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* XX (X): 1-22.

- Maluleke, TS & Nadar, S 2002. Breaking the covenant of violence against women. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 114: 5-17.
- Manetta, AA, Bryant, DF, Cavanaugh, T & Gange, T 2003. The Church: does it provide support for abused women? Differences in the perceptions of battered women and parishioners. *Journal of Religion and abuse* 5 (1): 5-22.
- Mark, C 2003. Islam: A primer. Congressional Research service (CRS), 1-6 [online]. Available from: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/lcrs/misc/RS21432-pdf> [Accessed 21 February 2011].
- Marks, JTW 1992. Theory, pragmatism and truth: Post-modernism in the context of action. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 17 (2): 161-173.
- Masenya, M 1997. Proverbs 31:10-31 in a South African context: A reading for the liberation of African (Northern Sotho) women. *Semeia* 78: 55-68.
- Masuku, N 2005. *Perceived oppression of women in Zulu folklore: A feminist critique*. Doctoral thesis: University of South Africa.
- Mazrui, AA 1998. The black woman and the problem of gender: An African perspective, in OH Kokole (ed), *The global African*. Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Mbiti, JS 1978. Christianity and African culture. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 20: 26-40.
- Mbuyeyesango, D & Scholz, S 2009. Roundtable discussion: Feminist biblical studies. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25 (2): 93-143.
- McBurney, DH 2001. *Research Methods*. California: Wadsworth.
- _____ 2004. *Research methods*, 6th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- McCloskey, LA Williams, C & Larsen, U 2005. Gender inequality and intimate partner violence among women in Moshi, Tanzania. *International Family Planning Perspectives* 31 (3): 124-130.
- McCloud, AB 2008. Contesting justice: Women, Islam, law and society (Book review). *Journal of Law and Religion* 25: 101-105.
- McMullen, C 2002. One day I went to a theological consultation on domestic violence. *Feminist Theology* 11 (2): 197-202.
- McQueen, RA & Knussen, C 1999. *Research methods in Psychology: A practical introduction*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Mejia, M.P 2007. Gender Jihad: Muslim women, Islamic jurisprudence, and women's rights. *Kritike* 1:1-24 [online]. Available from: http://www.kritike.org/journal/issue-1/mejia_june_2007.pdf. [Accessed 17 February 2011].

- Memon, K [Sa]. Wife abuse in the Muslim community [online]. Available from: http://www.zawaj.com/articles/abuse_memon.html. [Accessed 11 April 2008].
- Mernissi, F 1975. *Beyond the veil: Male-Female dynamics in a modern Muslim society*. Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company.
- _____ 1993. *The forgotten queens of Islam*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- _____ 1996. *Women's rebellion and Islamic memory*. London: Zed books.
- Mesatywa, NJ 2009. *The perceptions and experiences of African women in violent partner relationships: An exploratory study*. Doctoral thesis: University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.
- Miles, A 2002a. *Domestic violence: What every pastor needs to know*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- _____ 2002b. Holding Christian men accountable for abusing women. *Journal of Religion and Abuse* 4 (30): 15-20.
- Miles, AI 1999. When faith is used to justify abuse: Helping victims of domestic violence. *The American Journal of Nursing* 99 (5): 32-35.
- Miles, WFS 2008. Shariah as de-Africanization: Evidence from Hausaland. *Africa Today* 50 (1): 51-75.
- Miller, JB 2009. Forming future feminists: Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, conscientisation, and the college classroom. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25 (1): 99-123.
- Mir-Hosseini, Z 2006a. Towards gender equality: Muslim family laws. *Critical Inquiry*, 23-63 [online]. Available from: http://www.musawa.org/docs/pubs/wanted/Wanted_ZMH-ENpdf [Accessed 11 August 2011].
- _____ 2006b. Muslim women's quest for equality: Between Islamic law and feminism. *Critical Inquiry* 32: 629-645.
- Mitchell, MD, Hargrove, GL, Collins, MH, Thompson MP, Reddick, TL & Kaslow, NJ 2006. Coping variables that mediate the relation between intimate partner violence and mental health outcomes among low-income African American women. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 62 (12): 1503-1520.
- Modie-Moroka, T 2010. Intimate partner violence and poverty in the context of Botswana. *Journal of Psychology in Africa* 20 (2): 185-192.
- Moghadam, VM 2002. Islamic feminism and its discontents: Toward a resolution of the debate. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 27 (4): 1135-1171.
- _____ 2006. What is Islamic feminism?: Promoting cultural change for gender equality. UNESCO [online]. Available from:

www.unesco.org/shsles/files/1984.pdf.programme.pdf. [Accessed 26 May 2012].

- Moghissi, H 1999. *Feminism and Islamic fundamentalism: The limits of postmodern analysis*. London & New York: Zed Books.
- Mohagheghi, H 2006. Emerging women's movements in Muslim communities in Germany, in H Haker, S Ross & MT Waker (eds), *Women's voices in world religions*. London: SCM Press.
- Mojab, S 2001. Theorising the politics of 'Islamic 'Islamic feminism'. *Feminist Review* 69:124-146.
- Monyatsi, PP 2008. How the scriptures constrain the gender mainstreaming process. *Journal of Social Science* 17 (3): 243-252.
- Moon, SM, Dillon, DR, & Sprenkle, DH 1990. Family therapy and qualitative research. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 16 (4): 357-373.
- Moore, AR 2008. Types of violence against women and factors influencing intimate partner violence in Togo (West Africa). *Journal of Family Violence* 23: 777-783.
- Morgan, S 1999. Feminist approaches, in P Connolly (ed), *Approaches to the study of religion*. London: Cassell.
- Moustakas, C 1994. *Phenomenological research methods*. California, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Mouton, J 2001. *How to succeed in your Master's and Doctoral studies: A South African guide and resource book*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Moyo, FL 2004a. Can divorce be a solution to marital problems in a Christian marriage? *The Ecumenical Review* 56 (4): 437-447.
- _____ 2004b. Religion, spirituality and being a woman in Africa: Gender construction within the African religio-cultural experiences. *Agenda* 61: 72-78.
- Mudaly, N & Goddard, C 2006. *The truth is longer than a lie: Children's experiences of abuse and professional interventions*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Mudaly, R 2011. Dangerous alliance: Constructing marriage on the fault-line of gender. *Agenda* 25 (1): 79-89.
- Mukonyora, I 1993. Women's reading of the Bible, in I Mukonyora, JL Cox & FJ Verstraelen (eds), "*Rewriting" the Bible: The real issues-Perspectives from within Biblical and Religious Studies in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- _____ 1999. Women and ecology in Shona religion. *Word and World* XIX (3): 276-284.

- Mungwini, P 2008. Shona womanhood: Rethinking social identities in the face of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe. *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2 (4): 203-214.
- Munro, LT (ed) 1994. *Children and women in Zimbabwe: A situation analysis update*. Harare: UNICEF.
- Muriithi, SM 2008. Vulnerability and capability in Kenya: Towards an African women's public theology. Doctoral thesis: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa.
- Muslimah Media Watch, 2010 [online]. Available from: <http://muslimamediawatch.org/2010/10/they-don't-have-a-prayer-eid-for-muslim-women-in-south-africa/> [Accessed 11 February 2011].
- Mutswairo, SM, Masasire, A, Mberi, NE, Furusa, M & Chiwome, E 1996. *Introduction to Shona culture*. Eiffel Flats: Juta Zimbabwe (Pvt) Ltd.
- Muwati, I, Gambahaya, Z & Gwekwerere, T 2011. Africana womanism and African proverbs: Theoretical grounding of mothering and motherhood in Shona and Ndebele cultural discourse. *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 35 (1): 1-8.
- Muyebe, S & Muyebe, A 2001. *The African bishops on Human Rights: A resource book*. Limuru: Paulines Publications.
- Muzvidziwa, VN 2001. Marriage as a survival strategy: The case of Masvingo, Zimbabwe. *Zambezia* XXVII (ii): 147-165.
- Mwamwenda, TS 1995. *Educational psychology: An African perspective*, 2nd ed. Durban: Butterworths.
- Myamba, FP 2009. *Domestic rights movement in Tanzania: An exploration*. Doctoral thesis: Western Michigan University, USA.
- Nash, ST & Hesterberg, L 2009. Biblical framings of and responses to spousal violence in the narratives of abused Christian women. *Violence Against Women* 15 (3): 340-361.
- Nasimiyu-Wasike, A 1991. Christology and an African woman's experience, in RJ Shreiter (ed), *Faces of Jesus in Africa*. New York: Orbis Books.
- Nason-Clark, N 1997. *The battered wife: How Christians confront family violence*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- _____ 1999. Shattered silence or holy hush? Emerging definitions of violence against women. *Journal of Family Ministry* 13 (1): 39-56.
- _____ 2004. When terror strikes at home: The interface between religion and domestic violence. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43 (3): 303-310.
- _____ 2009. Christianity and the experience of domestic violence: What does faith have to do with it? *Social Work and Christianity* 36 (4): 379-393.

- Nason-Clark, N, Mitchell, LP & Beaman, LG 2004. Building bridges between churches and community resources: An overview of the work of the Religion and Violence Research Team, University of Nouveau-Brunswick- *Research Paper Series* 3, 1-25.
- National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, 2007a. *Religion and domestic violence: Working with victims* [online]. Available from: www.nrcdv.org [Accessed 10 February 2010].
- _____. 2007b. *Religion and domestic violence: Interpretations of religious doctrine* [online]. Available from: www.nrcdv.org [Accessed on 10 February 2010].
- Nawaz, N, Nawaz, Z & Majeed, I 2008. Mental and physical victimisation of rural women. *Journal of Agriculture and Social Sciences* 4 (2): 74-76.
- Ndulo, M 2011. African customary law, customs, and women's rights. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 18 (1): 87-120.
- Neuman, WL 2006. *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*, 6th ed. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Newell, S 2005. Devotion and domesticity: The reconfiguration of gender in popular Christian pamphlets from Ghana and Nigeria. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35 (3): 297-323.
- Ngcanga, DJM 1987. *The image of women in selected Sesotho novels*. Master's thesis: University of Transkei, South Africa.
- Nienhuis, NE 2009. Taming "wild ass-cults": An analysis of theology as a kyriarchal weapon of spiritual and physical violence. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25 (1): 43-64.
- Njoroge, NJ 2005. A new way of facilitating leadership: Lessons from African women theologians. *Missiology: An International Review* xxxiii (1): 29-46.
- Nkealah, N 2009. Contesting the culture of silence in Muslim women's writing: Women, sex, marriage and Alifa Rifaat's distant view of a minaret. *English Academy Review* 26 (1): 27-40.
- Noon, C 2008. Islamic feminism as articulated by Fatima Mernissi and its implication for Christian mission. *Encounters Mission Ezine*. 27; 1-17 [online]. Available from: www.redcliffe.org/encounters [Accessed 24 February 2011].
- Ntarangwi, M 2000. Feminism, anthropology and androcentrism: Any link for a male ethnographer? *Southern African Feminist Review* 4 (1): 25-35.
- Ntlama, NP 2010. Impediments in the promotion of the right to gender equality in post-apartheid South Africa. Doctoral thesis: University of South Africa.
- Ntsimane, R 2006. Dominant masculinities within the Zion Christian Church: A Preliminary investigation. *Journal of Constructive Theology* 12 (1): 27-37.

- Nwankwo, O 2003. Gender dimensions of culture in Africa, in *Proceedings of the Indaba*. Harare: Zimbabwe International Book Fair.
- O'Hear, A 1985. *What philosophy is: An introduction to contemporary philosophy*. London: Penguin Books.
- Oduyoye, MA Calling the church to account: African women and liberation, *Ecumenical Review*, October 1995 [online]. Available from: <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi-m2065/is-n4-v47/ai-18069979> [Accessed 16 August 2009].
- Ogland, EGS 2011. *Intimate partner violence against married women in Uganda: Integrating resource and gender theories*. Master's thesis: University of Texas, USA.
- Ogundipe, L 1993. African women, culture, and another development, in SM James & APA Busia (eds), *Theorizing Black feminisms: The visionary pragmatism of Black women*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Okereke, GO 2006. Violence against women in Africa. *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies* 1: 2-35.
- Ola-Aluko, YA & Edewor, PA 2002. Women, culture and the African society, in D Akintunde & H Labeodan (eds), *Women and the culture of violence in traditional Africa*. Ibadan: Sefer Books Ltd.
- Orebiyi, FA 2002. Institutional mechanisms against women, in D Akintunde & H Labeodan (eds), *Women and the culture of violence in traditional Africa*. Ibadan: Sefer Books Ltd.
- Ouali, AE 2011. Arab Spring brings little for women [online]. Available from: <http://morocoworldnews.com/2011/08/arab-spring-brings-little-for-women> [Accessed 11 August 2011].
- Para-Mallan, FJ 2010. Promoting gender equality in the context of Nigeria: Beyond increasing female access to education. *Compare* 40 (4): 459-477.
- Parker, I 1994. Qualitative research, in P Banister, E Burman, I Parker, M Taylor & C Tindall (eds), *Qualitative methods in Psychology: A research guide*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Partab, R 2011. Why do violent men do what they do? Dialoguing on privileges of patriarchy and domestic violence. *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa* 17 (1): 96-113.
- Patel, IA 1997. *Islam: The choice of thinking women*. London: Ta Ha Publishers Limited.
- Patton, MQ 2001. *Qualitative evaluation and research method*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Pazeraite, A 2008. 'Zakhar and neqevah He created them': Sexual and gender identities in the Bible. *Feminist Theology* 17 (1): 92-110.
- Peckover, S 2003. 'I could have just done with a little more help': An analysis of women's help-seeking from health visitors in the context of domestic violence. *Health and Social Care in the Community* 11 (3): 275-282.
- Pellauer, MD 1983. Violence against women: The theological dimension. *Christianity and Crisis* 43:206-212.
- Petersen, KW 1983. Wife abuse: The silent crime, the silent church. *Christianity Today* 25: 22-26.
- Phiri, IA 1997. Doing theology in community: The case of African women theologians in the 1990s. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99: 68-76.
- _____ 2001. Domestic violence in Christian homes: A Durban case study. *Journal for the Study of Religion* 14 (2): 85-101.
- _____ 2002. "Why does God allow our husbands to hurt us?" Overcoming violence against women. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 114: 19-30.
- Pobee JS (ed) 1994. *Culture, Women and Theology*. Delhi: ISPCK.
- Poon, J 2011. *Factors increasing the likelihood of dual and sole charging of women for intimate partner violence*. Doctoral thesis: University of Guelph, Canada.
- Popescu, M & Drumm, R 2009. Religion, faith communities and intimate partner violence, *Social Work and Christianity* 36 (4): 375-378.
- Posel, D, Rudwick, S & Casale, D 2011. Is marriage a dying institution in South Africa? Exploring changes in marriage in the context of *ilobolo* payments. *Agenda* 25 (1): 102-111.
- Potter, H 2007. Battered Black women's use of religious services and spirituality for assistance in leaving abusive relationships. *Violence Against Women* 13 (3): 262-284.
- Puhala, KA 2011. *Legal experiences of women survivors of domestic violence: Need for policies that address the justice gap*. Doctoral thesis: University of Massachusetts, USA.
- Pui-lan, K 1998. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and African Women's Theology. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. 14 (1): 6-16.
- Pyles, L 2006. Towards safety for low-income women: Promoting economic justice strategies. *Families in Society* 87 (1): 63-70.
- Raday, F 2003. Culture, religion and gender: International Journal of Constitutional Law 1 (4), 663-715 [online]. Available from: <http://icon.oxfordjournals.org/content/1/4/663> [Accessed 4 July 2011].

- Rakoczy, S 2005. Religion and violence: The suffering of women. *Sexuality in Africa Magazine* 2 (4): 6-9.
- _____ 2008. The theological vision of Elizabeth A. Johnson. *Scriptura* 98: 137-155.
- Ramsay, NJ 1999. Confronting family violence and its spiritual damage. *Journal of Family Ministry* 13 (3): 46-59.
- Reed, CKS 2010. *Intimate partner violence and fertility in Zambia*. Doctoral thesis: Texas Woman's University, USA.
- Rehman, J 2007. The Sharia, Islamic family laws and international human Rights law: Examining the theory and practice of polygamy and talaq. *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family* 21: 108-127.
- Richardson, B 2007. *Christian clergy response to intimate partner violence: Attitudes, training or religious views?* Doctoral thesis: Purdue University, Indiana.
- Ritchie, ID 2001. African theology and the status of women in Africa (A work in progress). Paper presented to the Canadian theological society [online]. Available from: <http://www3.sympatisc.ca/ian.ritchie.AFRWOMEN.htm> [Accessed 18 November 2008].
- Robertson, I 1981. *Sociology*. New York: Worth Publishers.
- Romito, P 2008. *A deafening silence: Hidden violence against women and children*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Rotunda, RJ, Williamson, G & Penfold, PM 2004. Clergy response to domestic violence: A preliminary survey of clergy members, victims and batterers. *Pastoral Psychology* 52 (4): 353-365.
- Rowan-Campbell, D 1999. Development with women, in D Eade (ed), *Development with women: Selected essays from development and practice*. Oxford: Oxfam.
- Ruether, RR 1985. Feminist interpretation: A method of correlation, in LM Russell (ed), *Feminist interpretation of the Bible*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- _____ 1989. The Western religious tradition and violence against women in the home, in JC Brown & CR Bohn (eds), *Christianity, patriarchy and abuse*. Seattle: The Pilgrim Press.
- Rugyendo, M 2005. The contribution of religion towards the promotion of gender and peace building: Case study Christianity, in D Rodriguez & E Natukunda-Togboa (eds), *Gender and peace building in Africa*. Costa Rica: University for Peace.
- Ruiz, BR 2005 Domestic violence and the church in Nicaragua. *Ministerial Formation* 104: 12-23.
- Rukuni, M 2007. *Being Afrikan. Rediscovering the traditional unhu-ubuntu-Botho pathways of being human*. Pretoria: Mandala Publishers.

- Russell, LM 1985. Authority and the challenge of feminist interpretation, in LM Russell (ed), *Feminist interpretation of the Bible*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Rzepka, CH 2002. Religious views and domestic violence. The Ripple Effect [online]. Available from: www.the-ripple-effect.org [Accessed 08 August 2012].
- Sai, A 2007. *Tamot: Masculinities in transition in Papua New Guinea*. Doctoral thesis: Victoria University, Australia.
- Savin-Baden, M & Major, CH 2010. *New approaches to qualitative research: Wisdom and uncertainty*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Schneider, EM 2000. *Battered women and feminist law-making*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Schlueter, CJ 1996. Creating a new reality: No more domestic violence. *Currents in Theology and Mission* 23 (4): 254-264.
- Scholz, S 2005. The Christian right's discourse on gender and the Bible. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21 (1): 81-100.
- Schutt, RK & Chambliss, DF 2006. *Making sense of the social world: Methods of investigation*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, London & New Delhi: Pine Forge Press.
- Scott-Tilley, D, Tilton, A & Sandel, M 2010. Biologic correlates to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder in female victims of intimate partner violence: Implications for practice. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care* 46 (1): 26-37.
- Sechzer, JA 2004. Islam and women: Where tradition meets modernity. *Sex Roles* 5(5):263-272.
- Shaikh, S 2007. A Tafsir of praxis: Gender, marital violence, and resistance in a South African Muslim Community, in D Maguire & S Shaikh (eds), *Violence against women in contemporary world religions: Roots and cures*. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press.
- Shannon-Lewy, C & Dull, V 2005. The response of Christian clergy to domestic violence: Help or hindrance? *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* 10: 647-659.
- Sharma, A 2002. (ed). *Methodology in Religious Studies: The interface with women's studies*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Sharp, S 2011. *Investigations on the use of religious culture to cope with intimate partner violence*. Doctoral thesis: University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.
- Sheikh, NS 2008. *A matter of faith: Muslim women's perception of their faith community's response to intimate partner violence*. Doctoral thesis: Wright University, USA.
- Sheldon, K 2005. *The A to Z of women in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Plymouth: Scarecrow

Press.

- Shorish-Shamley, Z [Sa]. Women's position, role, and rights in Islam [online]. Available from: <http://www.wapha.org/islam.pdf> [Accessed 14 February 2011].
- Sisselman, A 2009. *Domestic violence and faith communities: An exploratory study examining beliefs and experiences of Jews, non-Jews, and Rabbis*. Doctoral thesis: University of Albany, USA.
- Slabbert, I 2010. *The experience of low-income female survivors of domestic violence*. A Doctoral thesis: Stellenbosch University, South Africa.
- Smith, DJ 2004. Youth, sin and sex in Nigeria: Christianity and HIV/AIDS-related beliefs and behaviour among rural-urban migrants. *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 6 (5): 425-437.
- Smith, JI 1994. Women in Islam, in A Sharma (ed), *Today's woman in world religions*. New York: State University of New York.
- Sowell, EJ 2001. *Educational research: An integrative introduction*. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Sparrow, I 2006. *An exploratory study of women's experiences and place in the church: A case study of a parish in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA), Diocese of Cape Town*. Master's thesis: University of the Western Cape, South Africa.
- Spradley, J & McCurdy, DW 1997. *Conformity and conflict: Readings in cultural anthropology*, 9th ed. New York: Longman.
- Stacey, V 2008. Women in Islam. *St. Francis Magazine* 4 (3): 1-40.
- Stahl, AL 2007. *Victims who do not cooperate with law enforcement in domestic violence incidents*. Doctoral thesis: University of Pittsburgh, USA.
- Stephens, N & McDonald, R 2000. Assessment of women who seek shelter from abusing partners, in JP Vincent & EN Jouriles (eds), *Domestic violence. Guidelines for research-informal practice*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Steyn, HC 1994. *Worldviews in transition: An investigation into the New Age Movement in South Africa*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Stotland, NL 2000. Tug of war: Domestic violence and the misuse of religion. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 157: 696-702.
- Strydom, H & Delpont, CSL 2005. Sampling and pilot study in qualitative research, in AS De Vos, H. Strydom, CB Fouché & CSL Delpont (eds), *Research at grassroots: for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*, 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

- Suda, C 1996. The centrality of women in the moral teachings of African society. *Nordic Journal of African studies* 5 (2): 71-82.
- Sultana, AM, Jawan, JA & Hashim, I 2009. Influence of purdah (veil) on education and employment of women in rural communities. *European Journal of Social Sciences* 11 (2): 267-280.
- Sweetman, C (ed) 1998. *Gender, religion and spirituality*. Oxford: Oxfam.
- Takyi, BK 2003. Religion and women's health in Ghana: Insights into HIV/AIDS preventive and protective behaviour. *Social Science & Medicine* 56: 1221-1234.
- Takyi, BK & Addai, I 2002. Religious affiliation, marital processes and women's educational attainment in a developing society. *Sociology of Religion* 63 (2): 177-193.
- Takyi, BK & Mann, J 2006. Intimate partner violence in Ghana, Africa: The perspectives of men regarding wife-beating. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 32 (1): 61-78.
- Tamasase, K & Waldegrave, C 1994. Cultural and gender accountability in the just therapy approach. *Dulwich Centre Newsletter* (2 & 3): 55-67.
- Taylor, J & Stewart, S 1991. *Sexual and domestic violence: Help, recovery and action*. Harare: A. von Glehn & J. Taylor.
- Taylor, LL 2010. *The relationship between religion, spirituality and intimate partner violence: A qualitative exploration*. Doctoral thesis: University of Regina, Canada.
- Ter Haar, G 1990. *Faith of our fathers: Studies on religious education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Utrecht: University of Utrecht.
- Thistlethwaite SB 1985. Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation, in Russell LM (ed), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Thompson, EL 2001. Service providers' and Catholic clergy's responses to partner violence. *Journal of Religion and Abuse* 3 (1/2): 71-91.
- Tichagwa, W 1998. *Beyond inequalities: Women in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Southern African Documentation Centre (SARDC).
- Townsend, PO 2008. *A gender-critical approach to the Pauline material and the Zimbabwean context with specific reference to the position and role of women in selected denominations*. Master's thesis: University of South Africa.
- Tracy, SR 2006. Domestic violence in the church and redemptive suffering in I Peter. *Calvin Theological Journal* 41 (2N): 279-296.

- _____. 2007. Patriarchy and domestic violence: Challenging common misconceptions. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50 (3): 573-594.
- Tremmel, M 1994. *The people of the great river*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Tsanga, AS 1999. *Taking law to the people: Gender, law reform and community legal education in Zimbabwe*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe.
- Tuppurainen, AJ 2010. *Challenges faced by Muslim women: An evaluation of the writings of Leila Ahmed, Elizabeth Fernea, Fatima Mernissi, and Amina Wadud*. Doctoral thesis: University of South Africa.
- Uchendu, E. 2008 *Masculinities in contemporary Africa*. Gender series Volume 7. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- UNICEF, 2007. *The state of the world's children: Women and children, the double dividend of gender equality*. New York: United Nations.
- Van Dyke, NF 2005. *Domestic violence: Differences among rural, urban and suburban women*. Doctoral thesis: Binghamton University, USA.
- Van Natta, MF 2001. "I am no one's property": Ownership and abuse in intimate relationships. *Off Our Backs* 31 (10): 30-32.
- Vorster, JN 2008. Androgyny and early Christianity. *Religion and Theology* 15 (1): 97-132.
- Vorster, WS (ed) 1984. *Sexism and feminism in theological perspective*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- Wadud, A 2006. *Inside the gender jihad: Women's reform in Islam*. Oxford: Oneworld Publishers.
- Walker, B 1998. Christianity, development and women's liberation, in C. Sweetman (ed), *Gender, religion and spirituality*. Oxford: Oxfam.
- Waltington, CG & Murphy, CM 2006. The roles of religion and spirituality among African American survivors of domestic violence. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 62: 837-857.
- Warren, CS 2008. Lifting the veil: Women and Islamic Law. *Cardozo Journal of Law and Gender* 15 (33): 33-65 [online]. Available from: <http://www.cardozolawandgender.com> [Accessed 25 February 2011].
- Watkins, G 2000. *Feminism is for everybody*. London: Pluto Press.
- Weimann, GJ 2009. Divine law and the local custom in Northern Nigerian *zinatrials*. *Die Welt des Islams* 49: 429-465.
- Wendt, S 2008. Christianity and domestic violence: Feminist poststructuralist perspectives. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* 23 (2): 144-155.

- Whipple, V 1987. Counselling battered women from fundamentalist churches. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 13 (3): 251-258.
- Whittaker, A 2009. *Research skills for Social Work*. Great Britain: Learning Matters.
- Wiehe, VR 1998. *Understanding family violence. Treating and preventing partner, child, sibling and elder abuse*. London: Sage Publications.
- Wijzen, F & Tanner, R 1995. *Seeking a Good Life: Religion and Society in Usukuma, Tanzania*, Frans Jozef Servaas Wijzen: Books.
- Wiley, T 2009. Canon and conscience: A feminist perspective. *Word and World* 29 (4): 357-366.
- Wilkinson, D & Birmingham, P 2003. *Using research instruments: A guide for researchers*. London & New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Williams, S & Sweetman, C 2001. *Gender and Spirituality*. London: Oxfam.
- Wimberly, EP 1997. *Counselling African American marriages and families*. Kentucky: John Knox Press.
- Wolff, B, Blanc, AK & Gage, AJ 2000. Who decides? Women's status and negotiation of sex in Uganda. *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 2 (3): 303-322.
- Wu King, A 1999. Confronting violence against women: The church's calling? *Church and Society* 89 (5): 61-65.
- Yigzaw, T, Berhane, Y, Deyessa, N & Kaba, M 2010. Perceptions and attitudes towards violence against women by their spouses: A qualitative study in North West Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Journal of Health and Development* 24 (1): 39-45.
- Yoshihama, M 2002. Breaking the web of abuse and silence: Voices of battered women in Japan. *Social Work* 47 (4): 389-400.
- Young, KK 2002. From the phenomenology of religion to feminism and women's studies, in A Sharma (ed), *Methodology in Religious Studies: The interface with women's studies*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Zikmund, BB 1985. Feminist consciousness in historical perspective, in LM Russell (ed), *Feminist interpretation of the Bible*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Zimbabwe, 2006. The Domestic Violence Act (Act 14/2006) of 2006. Zimbabwean Government Gazette: Government Printer, Harare.
- Zimbabwe, 1982. The Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982. Zimbabwean Government Gazette: Government Printer, Harare.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Preamble

I am a doctoral student at the University of South Africa. I am carrying out a study on domestic violence and would like to know more about this. The results of my investigation will go into a thesis and I may also come up with a publication at the end. I would like to know if you would like to share your experience with me. I promise that no one will know you spoke to me and you will not be identified in any way in the writing(s) that I will produce. Feel free to say anything. If you have any question, I will be free to answer.

A: Background information

What is your age? What is your occupation? What is your highest educational level?
How many children do you have? How old is your husband? What is his occupation?
What is your religious affiliation?

B: Items on the intersection of religion, gender and violence

1. Tell me about your childhood experiences of domestic violence.
2. How important is religion in your life? What is the place of women in your religion?/How are women viewed in your religion?
3. Tell me in as much detail as possible about your experiences of domestic violence.
4. How did you handle the violence?
5. Did you consider making use of the law? If not, what are your reasons?
6. If you were to advise other women about dealing with domestic violence, what would you tell them?

Thank you for taking part in the study.

APPENDIX B: PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Age of spouse</i>	<i>Number of children</i>	<i>Employment</i>	<i>Partner employment</i>	<i>Religious affiliation</i>
1	30	35	1	Student	Businessman	RCC
2	31	35	0	Unemployed	Clerk	CFM
3	28	29	2	Teacher	Businessman	RCZ
4	52	52	4	Teacher	Teacher	RCC
5	34	36	3	Foreign currency dealer	Foreign currency dealer	ZAOGA
6	25	28	4	Teacher	Municipal artisan	RCC
7	48	53	5	Secretary	Human resources manager	UMCZ
8	30	31	2	Teacher	Driver	JMAC
9	31	32	2	Unemployed	Cleaner	ZZ
10	39	41	3	Teacher	Postal officer	RCZ
11	43	44	2	Teacher	Teacher	UMCZ
12	41	43	4	Teacher	Teacher	RCC
13	28	31	1	Unemployed	Teacher	SDA
14	40	44	3	Teacher	Teacher	ZAOGA
15	33	36	0	Teacher	Manager	RCZ
16	40	45	3	Unemployed	Minister of religion	RCZ
17	36	40	3	Unemployed	Nurse	JMAC
18	34	36	2	Teacher	Teacher	AFMZ
19	38	41	3	Unemployed	Policeman	ZZ
20	31	45	2	Unemployed	Businessman	ACJM
21	36	38	3	Unemployed	Teacher	BC
22	28	30	1	Unemployed	Soldier	RCC
23	30	33	3	Unemployed	Retail shop assistant	ISLAM
24	42	51	6	Unemployed	Shop manager	ISLAM
25	35	36	4	Unemployed	Tailor	ISLAM
26	21	25	2	Unemployed	Driver	ISLAM
27	31	34	3	Shop assistant	Carpenter	ISLAM
28	41	45	4	Till operator	Shop assistant	ISLAM
29	23	25	2	Unemployed	Clerk	ISLAM
30	26	26	3	Unemployed	Businessman	ISLAM

KEY (Religious affiliation)

RCC –Roman Catholic Church

RCZ- Reformed Church in Zimbabwe

UMCZ- United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe

BC-Baptist Convention

SDA- seventh Day Adventist Church

ZZ- Zviratidzo Zvavapostori

JMAC- Johanne Masowe Apostolic Church

ACJM- Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange

ZAOGA-Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa

AFMZ- Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe

CFM- Covenant Faith Ministries

APPENDIX C: THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT (ZIMBABWE, 2006)

Cap. 5:16

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

No. 14/2006



ZIMBABWE

ACT

To make provision for the protection and relief of victims of domestic violence and to provide for matters connected with or incidental to the foregoing.

ENACTED by the President and the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

PART I

PRELIMINARY

1 Short title and date of commencement

(1) This Act may be cited as the Domestic Violence Act [Chapter 5:16].

(2) This Act shall come into operation on a date to be fixed by the President by statutory instrument.

Provided that the President may fix different dates of commencement for different provisions of this Act.

2 Interpretation

(1) In this Act—

Printed by the Government Printer, Harare

211

"complainant", in relation to a respondent, means—

- (a) a current, former or estranged spouse of the respondent; or
- (b) a child of the respondent, whether born in or out of wedlock, and includes an adopted child and a step-child; or
- (c) any person who is or has been living with the respondent, whether related to the respondent or not; or
- (d) any person who—
 - (i) co-habits with the respondent; or
 - (ii) is or has been in an intimate relationship with the respondent; who applies for a protection order or in respect of whom a protection order may be issued;

"complainant's representative" means any one of the following persons who may make an application for a protection order on behalf of a complainant—

- (a) a police officer;
- (b) a social welfare officer;
- (c) an employer of the complainant;
- (d) a person acting on behalf of—
 - (i) a church or other religious institution;
 - (ii) a private voluntary organisation concerned with the welfare of victims of domestic violence;
- (e) a relative, neighbour or fellow employee of the complainant;
- (f) a counsellor;
- (g) such other class of persons as the Minister may appoint by notice in a statutory instrument;

"court" means a magistrates court, the High Court and, for purposes of section 18, a local court;

"domestic violence" means violence as defined in section 3;

"Council" means the Anti-Domestic Violence Council established in terms of section 16;

"counsellor" means an anti-domestic violence counsellor appointed in terms of section 15;

"Minister" means the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs or any other Minister to whom the President may, from time to time, assign the administration of this Act;

"private voluntary organisation" means a private voluntary organisation registered in terms of the Private Voluntary Organisations Act [Chapter 17:05] or any other law that may be substituted for it;

"protection order" means an order issued in terms of section 10;

"respondent" means a person who is alleged to be the perpetrator of an actual or threatened act of domestic violence;

"social welfare officer" means a person registered as a social worker in terms of the Social Workers Act [Chapter 27:21] (No. 9 of 2001) or employed in any Ministry responsible for social welfare, health, child welfare or gender or women's affairs.

3 Meaning of domestic violence and its scope

(1) For the purposes of this Act, domestic violence means any unlawful act, omission or behaviour which results in death or the direct infliction of physical, sexual or mental injury to any complainant by a respondent and includes the following—

- (a) physical abuse;
- (b) sexual abuse;
- (c) emotional, verbal and psychological abuse;
- (d) economic abuse;
- (e) intimidation;
- (f) harassment;
- (g) stalking;
- (h) malicious damage to property;
- (i) forcible entry into the complainant's residence where the parties do not share the same residence;
- (j) depriving the complainant of or hindering the complainant from access to or a reasonable share of the use of the facilities associated with the complainant's place of residence;
- (k) the unreasonable disposal of household effects or other property in which the complainant has an interest;
- (l) abuse derived from the following cultural or customary rites or practices that discriminate against or degrade women—
 - (i) forced virginity testing; or
 - (ii) female genital mutilation, or
 - (iii) pledging of women or girls for purposes of appeasing spirits, or
 - (iv) forced marriage, or
 - (v) child marriage; or
 - (vi) forced wife inheritance, or
 - (vii) sexual intercourse between fathers-in-law and newly married daughters-in-law;
- (m) abuse perpetrated on the complainant by virtue of complainant's age, or complainant's physical or mental incapacity;
- (n) abuse perpetrated on the complainant by virtue of complainant's physical, mental or sensory disability, including a visual, hearing or speech functional disability;
- (o) abuse perpetrated on the complainant by virtue of complainant's mental illness, arrested or incomplete development of the mind, psychopathic disorder or any other disorder or disability of the mind;
- (p) any act of domestic violence described in paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (e), (f), (g), (h) or (i) when it is perpetrated on the person or property of the complainant's representative.

(2) For the purposes of—

- (a) subsection (1)(a), "physical abuse" includes any act or threatened act of physical violence towards a complainant;
- (b) subsection (1)(b), "sexual abuse" includes any conduct that humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the sexual integrity of the complainant;
- (c) subsection (1)(c), "emotional, verbal and psychological abuse" means a pattern of degrading or humiliating conduct towards a complainant, including but not limited to the following—

- (i) repeated insults, ridicule or name-calling; or
 - (ii) repeated threats to cause emotional pain; or
 - (iii) the repeated exhibition of obsessive possessiveness which is such as to constitute a serious invasion of the complainant's privacy, liberty, integrity or security; or
 - (iv) any act, omission or behaviour constituting domestic violence as defined in subsection (1) which, when committed in the presence of minor members of the family, is likely to cause them mental injury;
- (d) subsection (1)(d), "economic abuse" includes—
- (i) the unreasonable deprivation of economic or financial resources to which a complainant is entitled under the law or which the complainant requires out of necessity, including household necessities, medical expenses, school fees, mortgage bond and rent payments, or other like expenses;
 - (ii) denying the complainant the right to seek employment or engage in any income-generating activity; *employment seeking*
- (e) subsection (1)(e), "harassment" means engaging in a pattern of conduct that induces in a complainant the fear of imminent harm or feelings of annoyance and aggravation, including—
- (i) watching or loitering outside or near the building or place where the complainant resides, works, carries on business, studies or happens to be;
 - (ii) repeatedly making or sending or causing another person to repeatedly make or send abusive phone calls or electronically-transmitted messages to the complainant, whether or not conversation ensues;
 - (iii) sending, delivering or causing the delivery of offensive or abusive letters, telegrams, packages, facsimiles, electronic mails or offensive objects to the complainant;
- (f) subsection (1)(f), "intimidation" includes ~~uttering~~ or conveying a threat or causing a complainant to receive a threat which induces a fear of imminent harm in the complainant;
- (g) subsection (1)(g), "stalking" includes following, pursuing or accosting the complainant.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2)(e) and (f) "imminent harm", in relation to a complainant, includes harm that the complainant fears to be imminent taking into consideration the history of respondent's known violent behaviour towards the complainant or other relevant factors.

4 Offence of domestic violence and acts excluded from its scope

(1) Subject to subsection (2), any person who commits an act of domestic violence within the meaning of section 3 shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding level fourteen or imprisonment for a period not exceeding ten years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

(2) The following acts of domestic violence shall not constitute an offence—

- (a) emotional, verbal and psychological abuse referred to in section 3(1)(c) and defined in section 3(2)(c)(i), (ii), (iii) and (iv); and
- (b) economic abuse referred to in section 3(1)(d) and defined in section 3(2)(d)(i) and (ii).

PART II

DUTIES OF POLICE AND POWERS OF ARREST IN RESPECT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

5 Duties of police officers in relation to domestic violence

(1) There shall be a section at every police station which shall, where practically possible, be staffed by at least one police officer with relevant expertise in domestic violence, victim friendly or other family-related matters.

(2) A police officer to whom a complaint of domestic violence is made or who investigates any such complaint shall—

- (a) obtain for the complainant, or advise the complainant how to obtain, shelter or medical treatment, or assist the complainant in any other suitable way;
- (b) advise the complainant of the right to apply for relief under this Act and the right to lodge a criminal complaint:

Provided that, where a complainant so desires, the statement of the nature of the domestic violence suffered by the complainant shall be taken by a police officer of the same sex as that of the complainant.

(3) A complainant who is not satisfied with the services of a police officer to whom he or she has reported a case of domestic violence shall have the right to register a complaint in accordance with any procedure prescribed for that purpose under section 19.

6 Arrest by police officer without warrant

(1) A police officer shall, after taking into account the factors mentioned in subsection (2), arrest without warrant any person whom he or she reasonably suspects has committed or is threatening to commit an act of domestic violence which, in terms of section 4, constitutes a criminal offence towards a complainant.

(2) In considering whether or not to arrest any person in terms of subsection (1), a police officer shall take into account—

- (a) the risk to the safety, health or well-being of the complainant; and
- (b) the seriousness of the conduct constituting the alleged act of domestic violence referred to in subsection (1); and
- (c) any other factor that makes him or her reasonably believe that the person has committed or is threatening to commit an act of domestic violence referred to in subsection (1).

(3) The police officer shall take all reasonable steps to bring the person suspected of having committed or threatening to commit an act of domestic violence before a magistrate within forty-eight hours.

PART III

PROTECTION ORDERS

7 Application for protection order

(1) Where an act of domestic violence has been or is being committed or is threatened, an application for a protection order may be made to a court by—

- (a) the complainant; or
- (b) any person acting with the consent of the complainant; or
- (c) any person having care or custody of a complainant who is a minor; or
- (d) any person acting as the complainant's representative, with or without the consent of the complainant:

Provided that the complainant's representative shall seek the leave of the court to make an application for a protection order without the consent of the complainant.

(2) In determining whether or not to grant leave in terms of the proviso to subsection (1)(d) the court shall have regard to all the circumstances including—

- (a) the reasons why the consent of the complainant has not been obtained; and
- (b) generally, whether or not it is in the best interests of the complainant that the application be permitted despite the absence of the complainant's consent.

(3) An application for a protection order shall be lodged with the clerk or registrar of the court and, where directed by the court, shall be supported by the affidavit of any person who can depose to matters which are relevant to the application.

(4) If the complainant is not represented by a legal practitioner, the clerk or registrar of the court shall inform the complainant of—

- (a) the relief available in terms of this Act; and
- (b) the effect of any order which may be granted and the means provided by law for its enforcement under this Act; and
- (c) the right to also lodge a criminal complaint against the respondent if a criminal offence has been committed by the respondent; and
- (d) the right to claim compensation for any loss suffered or injury caused by any act of domestic violence.

(5) The clerk or registrar of the court shall, as soon as possible and in any event not later than forty-eight hours after the application for a protection order has been lodged with him or her, place the application before the court.

(6) The application for a protection order may be brought outside ordinary court hours or on a day which is not an ordinary court day, if the court is satisfied that the complainant may suffer undue hardship if the application is not dealt with immediately.

8 Determination of application

(1) The court shall as soon as possible consider an application made in terms of section 7 and may for such purposes—

- (a) enquire whether an interim protection order or protection order has at any time been issued to either of the parties;
- (b) call for such evidence, whether oral or by affidavit, as it considers necessary, including medical evidence:

Provided that any such medical evidence shall be supported by a police report forming the basis on which an examination of a victim of domestic violence was made;

- (c) examine any witness before the court.

(2) Where the inquiry provided for in subsection (1)(a) reveals that there is an existing interim protection order or protection order the court shall—

- (a) consider whether there is any change in circumstances that warrants the granting of a fresh protection order; and
- (b) where appropriate, direct the parties to make application under section 12.

9 Issue of interim protection order

(1) Where, upon an application made in terms of section 7, the court is satisfied that *prima facie*—

- (a) the respondent has committed, is committing or is threatening to commit an act of domestic violence; and
- (b) ~~it is necessary or desirable to issue immediately an order to protect the complainant from serious or substantial harm or discomfort or inconvenience, whether, physical, emotional or economic, which results or may result from such actual or threatened domestic violence;~~

the court shall issue an interim protection order against the respondent notwithstanding that he or she has not been given notice of the application or has not been before the court.

(2) An interim protection order may, where appropriate, contain any direction, prohibition or award which may be contained in a protection order issued in terms of section 10.

(3) An interim protection order must be served on the respondent in the prescribed manner and must contain a notice calling upon the respondent to show cause, on a date specified in the order, why a protection order should not be issued.

(4) Whenever a court issues an interim protection order the court shall issue a warrant for the arrest of the respondent which shall be attached to the order and which shall be suspended on condition that the respondent complies with the order.

(5) Where upon an application made in terms of section 7 the court is satisfied that, *prima facie*, the respondent has committed, is committing or threatening to commit an act of domestic violence but that the circumstances do not justify or require the issue of an interim protection order, it may issue a notice calling upon the respondent to show cause why a protection order should not be made:

(6) An interim protection order (together with the suspended warrant of arrest issued in terms of subsection (4)) or a notice issued in terms of subsection (5) shall be served upon the respondent as soon as possible by any police officer:

Provided that, where the complainant so requires, service may be effected, at the complainant's expense, by the messenger of the court or deputy sheriff, as the case may be.

(7) The clerk or registrar of the court that issues an interim protection order shall supply the complainant or the complainant's representative with a certified copy of any interim protection order (together with the suspended warrant of arrest issued in terms of subsection (4)) or notice issued in terms of subsection (5), and, additionally or alternatively, forward the same to the police station nominated by the complainant or the complainant's representative.

(8) An interim protection order shall remain in force until it is replaced by a protection order or varied or revoked by a competent court.

(9) Any person who fails to comply with the terms and conditions of an interim protection order shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding level five or imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

10 Issue of protection order

(1) On the return day specified in an interim protection order or in a notice issued in terms of section 9(5), the court may issue a protection order if satisfied on a balance of probabilities that an act of domestic violence has been committed, is being committed or is threatened by the respondent.

(2) A protection order may be issued in the absence of the respondent if the court is satisfied that the respondent has been served with or has otherwise had notice of the application for such an order.

(3) Whenever a court issues a protection order the court shall issue a warrant for the arrest of the respondent which shall be attached to the order and which shall be suspended on condition that the respondent complies with the order for a period of at least five years.

(4) For the purpose of determining whether or not to issue a protection order the court may—

- (a) call for such evidence, whether oral or by affidavit, as it considers necessary, which shall form part of the record of proceedings; and
- (b) consider any evidence previously received in terms of section 8(1); and
- (c) examine any witness before the court.

(5) A protection order shall be served upon the respondent as soon as possible, and in any event not later than forty-eight hours after it is issued, by a police officer:

Provided that, where the complainant so requires, service may be effected at the complainant's expense by the messenger of court or deputy sheriff, as the case may be.

(6) The clerk or registrar of the court shall supply a certified copy of any protection order issued in terms of subsection (1), to the complainant or the complainant's representative, and, additionally or alternatively, to the police station nominated by the complainant or the complainant's representative.

(7) Any respondent who fails to comply with the terms and conditions of a protection order shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding level five or imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

(8) Any respondent who repeatedly breaches a protection order, whether or not that respondent has been previously prosecuted for such breach, shall be guilty of an offence and liable to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years.

(9) An application for a protection order shall not in any way bar criminal proceedings against a respondent.

(10) Where appropriate, the court may, in addition to any other remedies provided for under this Act, order that the complainant or the respondent, or any other affected member of the family of the complainant or respondent, undergo counselling by a counsellor.

11 Contents of protection order

(1) A protection order may, where appropriate—

- (a) prohibit the respondent from committing or enlisting the help of another person to commit any act of domestic violence;
- (b) direct the respondent to stay away from any premises or place where the complainant resides, or any part of such premises or place;
- (c) prohibit the respondent from entering or approaching any premises or place where or at which the complainant works, attends or frequents, or any part of such premises or place;
- (d) direct the respondent to pay emergency monetary relief in respect of the complainant's needs and those of any child or dependant of the respondent, including household necessities, medical expenses, school fees and mortgage bond or rent payments;
- (e) award the temporary custody of any child or dependant of the respondent to any person or institution and regulate rights of access by the respondent to such child or dependant;
- (f) direct the respondent to afford the complainant or any child or dependant of the complainant access to their place of residence and use of the facilities associated therewith;
- (g) direct the respondent to pay adequate compensation in the prescribed manner for any personal or physical injury, pain, trauma or loss suffered by the complainant;
- (h) direct that the complainant or the respondent or both undergo counselling by a counsellor with the respondent paying all the necessary expenses;
- (i) generally, direct the respondent to do or omit to do any act or thing which the court considers necessary or desirable for the well-being of the complainant or any child or dependant of the complainant.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), a protection order shall remain in force for a minimum period of five years or until revoked or varied by the court in terms of section 12.

(3) Any direction to pay emergency monetary relief and any award of temporary custody of any person which is contained in a protection order shall remain in force for such period not exceeding six months as the court may specify unless, prior to the expiry of

that period, the direction or award is revoked or extended by the court in terms of section 12 or an order or award is made in respect of the same matter by any other competent court:

Provided that no such extension shall exceed a period of three months at a time.

12 Application for revocation, variation or extension of protection orders

(1) Where there is a change of circumstances, a complainant, complainant's representative or respondent may apply to the court for the revocation or variation of an interim protection order or protection order or for the extension of any time limit attached to any direction or award contained therein.

(2) A complainant's representative may, with the leave of the court, apply for a revocation, variation or extension of a protection order without the consent of the complainant and the court, in determining whether or not to grant leave, shall have regard to all circumstances including those referred to in section 7(2).

(3) A complainant's representative shall not, under any circumstances, make an application for a revocation, variation or extension of a protection order that may prejudice the complainant.

(4) An application under subsection (1) or (2) shall be lodged with the clerk or registrar of the court who shall—

- (a) fix a date for the hearing of the application; and
- (b) place the application before the court as soon as possible, and in any event not later than forty-eight hours after lodging the application; and
- (c) give notice of the date of hearing to other interested parties.

(5) On the date fixed for the hearing of the matter, the court shall consider the application and may for that purpose—

- (a) call for such evidence, whether oral or by affidavit, as it considers necessary;
- (b) examine any witness before the court.

(6) If the court is satisfied that good cause has been shown it may revoke or vary any interim protection order or protection order or may extend any such order by a period not exceeding twenty-four months.

(7) The clerk or registrar of the court shall give notice to interested parties of any revocation, variation or extension granted in terms of this section.

13 Issue of further copies of orders and warrants of arrest

A complainant, complainant's representative or police officer may apply to the clerk or registrar of a court for a further certified copy of an interim protection order or protection order, together with the relevant warrant of arrest attached thereto, if the copy which was previously issued—

- (a) has been lost or destroyed; or
- (b) has been utilised for effecting the arrest of the respondent.

14 Enforcement of protection orders

(1) If, within five years after the date of issue of an interim protection order or protection order, the respondent breaches any term or condition of the order, the complainant or the complainant's representative may request any police officer to enforce the warrant of arrest attached to the order.

(2) A request in terms of subsection (1) shall be accompanied by one or more affidavits given by a person or persons who can depose to the facts alleged in connection with the breach of the interim protection order or protection order.

(3) If the police officer to whom a request in terms of subsection (1) is made is satisfied that—

- (a) the respondent concerned has been served with or has had notice of the order; and
- (b) there are reasonable grounds for believing that—
 - (i) the respondent concerned has committed, is committing or is threatening to commit a breach of the order concerned; and
 - (ii) it is necessary or desirable to do so to protect the complainant from serious or substantial harm, discomfort or inconvenience, whether physical, emotional or economic;

he or she shall arrest the respondent in terms of the warrant concerned.

(4) A respondent arrested in terms of subsection (3) shall be held in custody and brought before a court as soon as possible and in any event not later than forty-eight hours after the arrest on a charge of contravening section 8 or 9, as the case may be.

(5) Where a police officer to whom a request in terms of subsection (1) is made is satisfied that—

- (a) the respondent concerned has been served with or had notice of the order concerned; and
- (b) there are reasonable grounds to believe that the respondent concerned has committed, is committing or is threatening to commit a breach of the order concerned; and
- (c) it is not necessary or desirable to arrest the respondent in terms of any warrant of arrest attached to the order;

he or she shall serve a summons on the respondent to appear before a court on a charge of contravening section 9 or 10, as the case may be.

PART IV

ANTI-DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNSELLORS AND ANTI-DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNCIL

15 Anti-domestic violence counsellors

(1) For the better implementation of this Act, the Minister shall in consultation with the Ministers responsible for social welfare, health, child welfare and gender or women's affairs, appoint a panel consisting of—

- (a) social welfare officers or any officer involved in community work; and
- (b) members or employees of private voluntary organisations concerned with the welfare of victims of domestic violence; and
- (c) Chiefs or headmen as defined in the Traditional Leaders Act [Chapter 29:17];

who shall carry out the duties of anti-domestic violence counsellors in terms of this Act:

Provided that this section shall not limit the right of any complainant or respondent to obtain professional counselling from any person other than an anti-domestic violence counsellor.

- (2) An anti-domestic violence counsellor shall have the following functions—
 - (a) advising, counselling and mediating the solution of any problems in personal relationships that are likely to lead or have led to the use of domestic violence; and
 - (b) carrying out, upon the instruction of a court, investigations in relation to the financial status of complainants and respondents; and
 - (c) carrying out investigations and making arrangements for the accommodation of the complainants prior to the issue of an interim protection order or protection order; and

- (d) making immediate arrangements for the medical or other examination of a child where there is a reasonable suspicion that he or she is a complainant; and
- (e) providing counselling to complainants and respondents; and
- (f) performing any other function which the Minister may assign to him or her for the purposes of this Act.

(3) An anti-domestic violence counsellor may, in carrying out his or her duties, seek the assistance of any police officer.

16 Anti-Domestic Violence Council

(1) The Minister shall, for the purpose of this Act, establish a council to be known as the Anti-Domestic Violence Council which shall consist of the following members—

- (a) one representative nominated by each of the following—
 - (i) the Ministry responsible for justice; and
 - (ii) the Ministry responsible for gender or women's affairs; and
 - (iii) the Ministry responsible for health and child welfare; and
 - (iv) the Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry responsible for social welfare; and
 - (v) the Zimbabwe Republic Police; and
 - (vi) the Ministry responsible for education; and
 - (vii) the Council of Chiefs referred to in section 37 of the Traditional Leaders Act [Chapter 29:17] (No. 25 of 1998) or any other law that may be substituted for it; and
- (b) three persons representing the interests of private voluntary organisations concerned with the welfare of victims of domestic violence, children's rights and women's rights; and
- (c) one person representing the interests of churches in Zimbabwe; and
- (d) one person representing the interests of any other body or organisation which the Minister considers should be represented on the Council.

(2) The members of the Council shall be persons with no criminal record.

(3) The chairperson and the deputy chairperson of the Council shall be persons qualified in the prescribed disciplines and shall be appointed by the Minister in consultation with the Minister responsible for social welfare.

(4) Members of the Council shall be appointed by the Minister for such period, not exceeding three years, as he or she shall specify on their appointment.

(5) The Minister shall prescribe the terms and conditions of service of all members of the Council.

(6) Members of the Council shall be paid, out of moneys appropriated for the purpose by Act of Parliament, such remuneration and allowances as may be prescribed.

(7) The Council shall—

- (a) hold its meetings at least four times a year and in accordance with such procedure; and
- (b) keep and furnish to the Minister such records of its meetings;

as may be prescribed or as may be directed by the Minister.

(8) Half the members of the Council shall constitute a quorum at any meeting of the Council.

- (9) The Council shall have the following functions—
- (a) to keep under constant review the problem of domestic violence in Zimbabwe;
 - (b) to take all steps to disseminate information and increase the awareness of the public on issues of domestic violence;
 - (c) to promote research into the problem of domestic violence;
 - (d) to promote the provision of services necessary to deal with all aspects of domestic violence and monitor their effectiveness;
 - (e) to monitor the application and enforcement of this Act and any other law relevant to issues of domestic violence;
 - (f) to promote the establishment of safe-houses for the purpose of sheltering the victims of domestic violence, including their children and dependants, pending the outcome of court proceedings under this Act;
 - (g) to promote the provision of support services for complainants where the respondent who was the source of support for the complainant and her or his dependants has been imprisoned;
 - (h) to do anything necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.
- (10) The Council shall submit annual reports to the Minister on issues related to domestic violence and may append to such reports such recommendations for legislative or other action as it deems fit.
- (11) The Council shall appoint one or more committees on which it may confer such of the functions of the Council as it thinks fit.
- Provided that the vesting of any functions in a committee in terms of this section shall not thereby divest the Council of such functions and the Council may amend or rescind any decision of any committee in the exercise of its functions.
- (12) The Minister, with the approval of the Public Service Commission, shall assign as staff of the Council such persons employed in his or her Ministry as will enable the Council to properly carry out its functions in terms of this Act.

PART V

GENERAL

17 General provisions as to offences

- (1) Any person who makes any false statement in any application or affidavit made in terms of this Act, knowing such statement to be false or not believing it to be true, shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding level five or imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.
- (2) Where any offence other than one referred to in this Act is committed by a respondent upon a complainant during or in furtherance of the commission of any act of domestic violence, the court convicting the respondent therefor shall regard such circumstance as aggravating when assessing the sentence to be imposed.
- (3) For the avoidance of doubt it is declared that the prosecution of a respondent under this Act or any other law shall not prevent the complainant from seeking protection and redress in terms of this Act.

18 Special jurisdiction of local courts

Local courts shall have jurisdiction to deal with cases involving the following acts of domestic violence and, within the limits of their ordinary jurisdiction under Part IV of the Customary Law and Local Courts Act [Chapter 7:05], to issue protection orders in respect thereof—

- (a) emotional, verbal and psychological abuse referred to in section 3(1)(c) and defined in section 3(2)(c)(i), (ii), (iii) and (iv); or
- (b) economic abuse referred to in section 3(1)(d) and defined in section 3(2)(d)(i) and (ii).

19 Regulations

(1) The Minister may make regulations prescribing anything which under this Act needs to be prescribed or which in his or her opinion is necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying out or giving effect to this Act.

(2) Without derogating from the generality of subsection (1), regulations made under that provision may provide for—

- (a) the form of applications in terms of this Act;
- (b) the form of warrants and orders issued in terms of this Act;
- (c) the method of service of documents in terms of this Act;
- (d) the procedure of the Council;
- (e) the functions of clerks or registrars of court under this Act.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT [CHAPTER 5:16]

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

PART I

PRELIMINARY

Section

1. Short title and date of commencement.
2. Interpretation.
3. Meaning of domestic violence and its scope.
4. Offence of domestic violence and acts excluded from its scope.

PART II

DUTIES OF POLICE AND POWERS OF ARREST IN RESPECT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

5. Duties of police officers in relation to domestic violence.
6. Arrest by police officer without warrant.

PART III

PROTECTION ORDERS

7. Application for protection order.
8. Determination of application.
9. Issue of interim protection order.
10. Issue of protection order.
11. Contents of protection order.
12. Application for revocation, variation or extension of protection orders.
13. Issue of further copies of orders and warrants of arrest.
14. Enforcement of protection orders.

PART IV

ANTI-DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNSELLORS AND ANTI-DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNCIL

15. Anti-domestic violence counsellors.
16. Anti-Domestic Violence Council.

PART V

GENERAL

17. General provisions as to offences.
18. Special jurisdiction of local courts.
19. Regulations.

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study that explores the experiences of Christian and Muslim women with domestic violence and how they perceive the usefulness of the Domestic Violence Act. You were chosen for the study because of knowledge and insight you can bring to the study. This form is part of a process called **informed consent** to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named **Excellent Chireshe** who is a doctoral student at the University of South Africa.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to provide women of faith from Christianity and Islam the opportunity to share their experiences of domestic violence and their perceptions of usefulness of the Domestic Violence Act under such circumstances.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to provide in-depth responses to interview questions

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that I will respect your decision of whether or not you want to participate in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you are not comfortable to answer.

Confidentiality

All of your personal information will be held in strict confidence. Your responses to the questions will not have identifiers attached to them. I will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Furthermore, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Benefits

The benefits of this study are that you will be providing much needed knowledge on this topic. Participating in this research allows you the opportunity to share your experience of domestic violence from your perspective.

Compensation:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. As such, there is no remuneration but your contribution shall be highly appreciated.

You may ask any questions you have now.

Statement of Consent:

I have understood the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement.

By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Name of Participant -----

Date of consent-----

Participant's Signature-----

Researcher's Signature-----

APPENDIX E



DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES & ARABIC
DEPARTEMENT GODSDIENSWETENSKAP & ARABIES
Enquiries/Navrae: (012) 429-4523
Fax/Faks: (012) 429-3221
E-mail/E-pos: alickson@unisa.ac.za

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Ms Excellent Chireshe is a doctoral student at the Department of Religious Studies and Arabic at the University of South Africa.

She is engaged in research on a thesis entitled 'The utility of the Zimbabwean Domestic Violence Act: Masvingo Christian and Muslim women's experience'. Any assistance that can be given to her in this research will be appreciated.

H C Steyn 11/08/11

Prof H C Steyn
Chair: Department of Religious Studies
University of South Africa
P O Box 392
UNISA
0003
SOUTH AFRICA



University of South Africa
Pretorius Street, Heideveld, Roseburg, City of Tlokweng
PO Box 392, UNISA, 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 • Facsimile: +27 12 429 3150
www.unisa.ac.za