

The Music of Marriage Ceremonies in Zambia: An examination of subtleties for women empowerment or dis-empowerment

When the low levels of female participation in decision making is considered, there is reason to believe that among other factors, the socialisation and enculturation of women through marriage ceremonies in Zambia has a deep impact on how women perceive their roles beyond the household. This study examined the subtleties for women empowerment or disempowerment in the music of women's marriage ceremonies when measured against policy and legal frameworks for gender equality in Zambia by interlinking gender and music hence situating the study in the feminist symbolic interactionism theory and hermeneutics for interpretation of music texts. Participants included six women, who prepare women for marriage from the Bemba and Chewa tribes in Zambia. Data was collected through observations, interviews and focus group discussions and analysed using content analysis and themes. Preliminary findings indicate that music of marriage ceremonies has undertones of female subservience both through texts of song, dance and gestural actions. The study concludes that music of marriage ceremonies potentially influences how women perceive themselves and ultimately impact on what they become and chose to participate in or not when examined against policy and legal frameworks for gender equality in Zambia.

Key words: Gender, Marriage Ceremonies, Music, Zambia

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