Gender, Power and Women's Participation in Community Environmental Education

Manuku Mukoni, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe;
Ronicka Mudaly and Relebohile Moletsane, University of KwaZulu–Natal, South Africa

Abstract

The gendered experiences of women in community environment education (CEE) are often relegated to the margins of environmental education research discourse. This study disrupts the linearity of the relationship between women's physical presence in work settings and their participation in these spaces. Specifically, this work addresses the question: What constrains women's participation in the activities of one Zimbabwean community environmental education organisation (CEEO)? *This qualitative study was underpinned by a critical philosophical paradigm with ecofeminism as the overarching theoretical framework. Data were generated using document analysis of teaching materials, individual interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. Twenty-six women aged between 38 and 62 years, who frequently attended the CEE programme, were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling techniques, to participate in this study. Findings suggest that there is widespread devaluing of women's contributions during meetings of the CEEO by other stakeholders and, ultimately, by women themselves. This results in the silencing of women and endorses their positioning as passive agents. Gendered teaching materials ameliorate women's mutism and their confinement to tasks which do not require technical expertise. The findings of this research have implications for enabling CEEOs to reflect deeply on their organisational structures, methods and materials, in order to address women's constraints in CEE activities. This could recast women as active agents in CEEOs.*

Introduction

> We frequently attend these meetings and we do give our ideas but it just ends in the air. (Thiathu)

> They don't want to use ideas of a woman. Women's contributions are taken lightly. Men don't want to listen to women's ideas. (Sophie)

> But if we were men there could be a difference because men are working, they try, like men to plan, for example they may drill a borehole and buy an engine for watering. (Renaye)

The preceding views were articulated by women who were engaged in a Zimbabwean community environmental education organisation (CEEO) programme. The quotes by Thiathu

and Sophie reflect the devaluing of women's contributions during meetings of the CEEO. This results in a 'hazardous play of dominations' (Foucault, 1984:83) between the genders and the positioning of women by other stakeholders and, eventually, by women themselves, as subaltern (Spivak, 1988). Spivak refers to the silencing of women when she asserts: 'Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears […] [and is] caught between tradition and modernisation' (Spivak, 1998, cited in Shandilya, 2014:1). Spivak (1988) adds that women's silence emanates from both their subordination within ideological constructions of gender, which reinscribe men as being dominant, as well as their naturalised subalternity within the context of colonial production. According to Lindemann (2012:39), the social construction of gender has positioned man as the 'unstated point of reference for what is paradigmatic of human beings'. Within this gendered construction, women are viewed as not merely being different compared to men, but as deviating from the norm, and this deviance includes the perception of women's inferior intellectual and emotional capacity to engage in useful work (Lindemann, 2012). Lorber and Martin (2001) attribute the domination of men and subordination of women in the workforce to the construction of men as having the capacity to be objective, innovative and unafraid to take risks, and therefore as being better suited to higher ranks in the workforce. Decades of socialisation about hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity on gendered norms about what work women can and should do influences the quality of women's lives (Lorber & Martin, 2001).

Consequently, women such as Renaye show a preference for heteronormative masculine traits, which they view as being innovative, creative, persevering and possessing a capacity for problem-solving, each of which can advance the vision and mission of a CEEO. We seek to understand these complexities by reflecting on women's lived experiences in a CEEO. We draw on Agarwal's (2001) typology of participation and theoretical debates about access, agency and voice in order to respond to the following research question: *What constrains women's participation in the activities of a CEEO?*

Women's participation in productive work is often defined in terms of numerical descriptors which are related to their physical presence in these work settings (Agarwal, 2001; Benjamin, 2010; Fazlul, Fazlur, Muhammed, Iffat, Muhammad & Mehtab, 2016). For example, in community forestry groups in India, Agarwal's study (2001) reveals that women's enrolment in general bodies and executive committees is typically low. Efforts to increase the number of women as members are being made. This numerical increase could involve membership only, where the women may or may not attend meetings. However, the cultural exclusion of women from decision-making processes is mirrored in these settings because women are not told about the decisions which are made, and when they query these, they are questioned about the reasons for wanting to know about the discussions which occurred at meetings. When they do attend meetings, they report that they cannot voice their opinions, and when men have finished speaking, this signals the end of the meeting. Therefore, women's attendance at meetings (albeit low) does not imply that they participate in decision-making.

We seek to disrupt the linearity of the relationship between women's physical presence in these spaces, and their participation in work settings, by bringing women's lived experiences in a CEEO to the centre of the research discourse. We begin by considering women's roles

in community environmental education programmes within the global context generally and the Southern African context specifically. This is followed by arguing for greater conceptual understanding of 'participation', drawing on theoretical constructs of Agarwal's (2001) typology of participation. In addition, we engage with theoretical debates related to understanding access, agency and voice (Thuma, 2011). This is followed by an exploration of ecofeminism as an apposite theoretical framework, and the research design and methodology used in the study. Finally, the findings are presented and discussed, and conclusions drawn.

Role of Women in Environmental Education

Environmental education has been identified as an essential component of sustainable conservation worldwide (Sengwar, 2015). Environmental education aims to ensure that the world population is not only aware of and concerned about the total environment and its associated problems, but also has the knowledge and skills to address them. It does this by cultivating attitudes, knowledge, commitment and skills among community members to work individually and collectively towards solving current problems and preventing new ones (Shil, Sarker, Arkter & Bakali, 2013; Sola, 2014; UNESCO–UNEP, 1978).

Available literature has long suggested that environmental education initiatives and sustainable development strategies that do not promote the full participation and empowerment of women and girls are bound to fail (UNDP, 2012). Yet, in a 1970 publication, *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, Boserup argued that women as a group continued to be marginalised due to gender inequality in various socio-economic spaces. It is for these reasons that participation was one of the key objectives of the 1977 Tbilisi intergovernmental conference on environmental education (UNESCO–UNEP, 1978). Participation, and in particular the participation of women, became a central goal of environmental education (UNESCO–UNEP, 1978) and education for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2005). This was premised on the understanding that strengthening women's participation in all spheres of life, including community environmental education, is key to international development programmes.

More recently, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) acknowledged women as key to the development agenda. Their role in, for example, supporting their households and communities in achieving food and nutrition security, generating income, and improving rural livelihoods and overall well-being (FAO, 2011), means that any initiative that does not take cognisance of their full participation is unlikely to succeed. For example, the MDGs' focus on gender and gender equity was a central feature of the mandate for member states (Unterhalter & Dorward, 2013). For instance, MDG 3 (Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women) mandated member states to develop programming that aimed to close the gender gap in various spheres of life, including health and education. Others, such as MDG 2 (Achieve Universal Primary Education) and MDG 5 (Improve Maternal Health), focused on improving girls' and women's outcomes in education and health. Of particular significance to our argument in this article is MDG 7 (Ensure Environmental Sustainability), which mandated educational programmes aimed at developing knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable all citizens to participate in efforts towards ensuring environmental sustainability.

With the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replacing the MDGs in September 2015, the agenda for gender equity in education, including environmental education, has been reinforced. Significantly, SDG 4 seeks to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', including in community environmental education.

However, studies suggest that due to the influence of patriarchal systems that privilege men's voices over those of women (Chifamba, 2013; Roy, 2014), unlike their male counterparts, women do not participate fully in environmental education programmes. In many contexts, women continue to be relegated to the margins in community environmental education (e.g. Chifamba, 2013; Mai, Mwangi & Wani, 2011; Sultana, 2014). Moreover, available research suggests that participation in many of the studies tends to be measured by the numerical strength of women in CEE activities in organisations or institutions, with the women's lived experiences of such participation receiving significantly less attention. Thus, in this paper, we analyse women's lived experiences within a CEEO by focusing on the factors that constrain their participation therein.

Understanding Participation

To understand participation, several models have been developed over the years, including, among others, Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation (Figure 1), Davidson's (1998) wheel of participation and Agarwal's (2001) typology of participation. For example, Arnstein (1969) developed what she called the ladder of participation in response to the notion of citizen participation in federal social programmes in the United States in the 1960s. The notion of a ladder is premised on the understanding that those with power are often reluctant or unwilling to relinquish it. Thus, she defined participation as a system in which there is a 'redistribution of power that enables the have–not citizens presently excluded from political and economic processes to be deliberately included in the future' (Arnstein, 1969:216). Informed by this understanding, she identified three stages/categories of participation. The first stage involves non–participation, where the power holders educate or care for those without power. The second stage involves those in power informing, consulting and placating those with less power. Participation at this level is largely tokenistic, where the participants are informed but still lack the power to inform decision–making. The third level of participation involves partnerships, where power is delegated downwards and citizens have control over decision–making.

A few decades later, there were several critiques of Arnstein's model and the alternative models that emanated from it. Building on the model, scholars were of the view that *participation* must be underpinned by notions of inclusivity through collective engagement, cooperation and working together to benefit all members of a community. However, research also suggested that social and systemic factors can collude to result in 'participatory exclusions' (Agarwal, 2001:1623). Of particular relevance to the study in this article is Agarwal's (2001) concern that while gender influences participation in significant ways, especially in community environmental programmes, research discourse had largely ignored its influence. To understand participation, Agarwal (2001) developed a typology with six levels to describe who is expected

Figure 1. Arnstein's ladder of participation
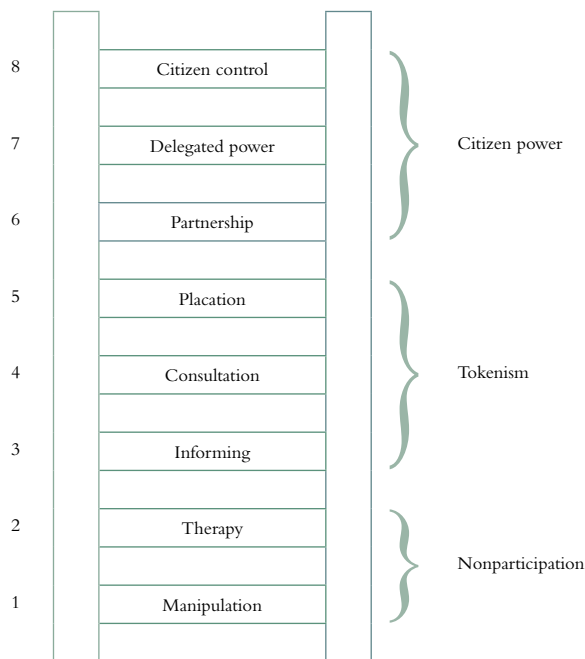
Source: Arnstein (1969:217)

to be involved, the goals of participating in an activity and the means to attain these goals (Table 1). According to the model, at the first level, there is nominal participation, often simply characterised by membership of a group (Chopra, Kadekodi & Murty, 1990). The second level, passive participation, involves attending meetings without engaging in decision-making, or being informed about decisions after they have been accepted. The third level is consultative participation, and involves soliciting opinions from the participants, but not really using them to inform decision-making. At the fourth level is activity-specific participation, where one is requested to complete predetermined tasks. The fifth level involves active participation, where one may offer unsolicited opinions and initiate certain activities. The highest level is interactive participation, which involves affording all participants an equal opportunity to make decisions which are crucial to the functioning of the group and the achievement of the organisation's goals (Agarwal, 2001).

Interactive participation or 'true participation' (Khaledi, Agahi & Eskandari, 2012:57) is based on confidently articulated concerns of participants and is therefore empowering and may lead to skills-building.

Informed by an understanding of 'true' participation as interactive and empowering, this article analyses the nature of constraints against women's participation in the activities of one CEEO in Zimbabwe. In particular, it asks: *How and why was the organisation unable to delegate power to the women so as to enable them to inform decision-making?* In essence, what prevented the interactive or true participation of the women?

Table 1. Agarwal's typology of participation

Form/level of participation	Characteristics/features
Normal	Membership in the group
Passive	Being informed of decisions *ex post facto*; or attending meetings and listening in on decision-making, without speaking up
Consultive	Being asked an opinion in specific matters without guarantee of influencing decisions
Activity-specific	Being asked to (or volunteering to) undertake specific tasks
Active	Expressing opinions, whether or not solicited, or taking initiative of other sorts
Interactive (empowering)	Having voice and influence in the group's decisions

Source: Agarwal (2001:1624)

An Ecofeminist Framing of the Study

The overarching theoretical framework which informs this study is ecofeminism, which examines and disrupts prevailing hierarchical power relations. It aims to create spaces for equitable participation by marginalised groups, and, in this study, is used to examine spaces in which women within a CEEO participate. This theory is underpinned by values of reciprocity and responsibility.

Warren's (1990) ecofeminist theory describes a logic of domination which is intimately linked to privilege and power. The more powerful, who enjoy greater privilege (referred to as the 'Ups'), are valued to a greater extent and have greater influence than the less powerful (referred to as the 'Downs'). Within patriarchal societies, men enjoy these privileges and women are less powerful players. This creates a fertile platform for conceptualising men and women as oppositional, disjunctive pairs, and forms the basis for the creation of value dualisms (Warren, 1990). Plumwood (1993) deepens the understanding of value dualisms within an ecofeminist context by alluding to its critical components. These are homogenising (denying differences which exist to devalue others), backgrounding or denial (excluding the oppressed by trivialising or ignoring their ideas), hyperseparation or radical exclusion (exaggerating differences between dualised pairs, for example, attributing markedly different roles to men and women in CEE spaces), relational definition (the oppressed or 'Downs' are viewed as deficient compared to the 'Ups') and instrumentation, where the oppressed are only deemed to be useful for ways in which they can serve the valued side (Ups) of the dualised pair (Plumwood, 1993).

Ecofeminism values agency, a theoretical construct which is inextricably linked to freedom of choice (Alsop, Bertelsen & Holland, 2006; Giddens, 1984), the capacity to transform one's experiences (McNay, 2016), the ability to resist repression (Molla & Cuthbert, 2014) and the ability to influence decisions (Patterson, 2009). In this study, women's agency was explored by examining women's ability to make choices, to resist oppressive processes, and to disrupt normalised forms of repression which permeated the CEEO. This was done by analysing conversations, discourses and activities which prevented them from participating fully, and, in Agarwal's (2001) terms, interactively.

Agency can be active or passive. In passive forms of agency, women have little choice and feel satisfied when informal, work-related, self-denigrating, low-skilled and repetitive roles are accomplished (Kabeer, 2005). The active form of agency enhances women's capacity to choose, and in doing this, casts women as creative and effective agents of transformation. Transformative agency, posited by Kabeer (2005), is in opposition to patriarchal values. In this study, we contend that women's agency can be enhanced if spaces for women to influence CEE decisions and activities emerge.

Thuma (2011) deepens the understanding of agency by examining its connectedness to visibility within the public domain. This visibility affirms the reality of women's existence and identity (Thuma, 2011). We examined women's visibility in public spaces, including printed materials available for public consumption, in order to study their participation in CEE activities.

Methodology

We worked as a group of three researchers (one principal researcher based in Zimbabwe, and two other researchers) to design this qualitative study. Informed by a critical philosophical paradigm, we adopted an inductive approach to obtain insight into individual meanings in order to understand what Creswell refers to as 'the complexity of a situation' (2013:32), in this case, women's participation in the activities of a CEEO. This research study was loosely structured, open-ended and iterative (Maxwell, 2012). An ethnographic design (Van Maanen, 2011), where the principal researcher was immersed in the social setting for 17 months to increase her understanding of participants' lived experiences, was adopted. This enabled her to obtain direct experience of how women participated within the CEEO. The research site was a CEEO in an agro-ecological region which has a dry climate and sparse natural resources. Environmental degradation and poverty interact in a vicious circle within this community. Degradation of forests and woodlands is rife and is due to unsustainable harvesting. Products from the forests are also used for food security in this community. Within this context, CEEOs have been established to teach villagers about socio-ecological challenges such as climate change, health and food security.

Data were generated using document analysis of teaching materials, individual interviews (II), focus group discussions (FGD) and participant observations (PO). There were 26 women participants in total, between the ages of 38 and 62 years, and they all engaged in focus group discussions. The sample was varied in terms of home language and marital status. The women

participated in different CEE activities, including vegetable gardening, trading in mopani worms, fattening cattle, cultivating citrus trees and biodiversity conservation. Eleven women who attended the CEE programme were purposively selected to participate in individual interviews and were recruited through snowball sampling. The teaching activities of the four male facilitators who controlled the CEE programme were observed. Each participant was recruited after the principal researcher obtained permission from the village leader, and informed consent from the participants themselves. We used pseudonyms in reports to protect the identity of the participants.

A pilot study was conducted to test the feasibility of methods and clarity of instruments, in order to enhance the credibility of the study. Multiple and varied sources of information from different datasets were used to search for convergence of information by triangulation. Thick descriptions and member checking were used to enhance research rigour.

The first author, the principal researcher, transcribed the audio-recorded interviews verbatim and then translated them from Venda, the first language of the majority of participants, into English. The three researchers then analysed the data, starting with seeking recurrent codes within and across datasets, and then sorting them into categories which were analysed thematically (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The themes inform the analysis below.

Findings and Analysis

In order to examine factors which constrained women's participation in CEE activities, a qualitative analysis of selected activities and practices, as well as materials used to teach, was done. The findings from this study suggest that, in response to the research question (*What constrains women's participation in the activities of a CEEO?*), women's participation in this CEEO remained below the interactive and empowering levels. In particular, four factors that constrained the women's participation in CEE activities emerged. These included silencing women, facilitating patriarchal hegemony, positioning women as passive agents and gendered teaching materials.

Silencing women

Within CEE activities women were often silenced, and in turn censored themselves. Their silencing was influenced by the prevailing unequal power relations between men and women, both in domestic as well as in broader community activities. In particular, gender inequality produced fear of acting against the community norms, which saw women as demure and passive, and men as more assertive and strong. Illustrating this fear, Sophie, one of the participants explained:

> No! At times the father will be in the meeting, we are together, when I stand up and try to answer sometimes what will be deliberated on might be aligned to our problems and he will signal me with the eye and I have to sit down. (Sophie, FGD 1)

The women in this study spoke about the psychological and physical violence which was used to control what they said, where they spoke and to whom they spoke. Symbolic and substantive

forms of violence meted out by male actors in their lives condemned them to silence during CEEO meetings. Sophie again described the violence:

> In meetings we will not speak up because we might be beaten when we get home by our husbands and fail even to go and report to the police. (Sophie, FGD 1)

The women's silence could signal their effort at self-preservation within a violent context. This points to the inextricable relationship between 'the private and public spheres of the subordination of women' (Wolpe, 1998:90).

Barriers to women's access to public expression within the CEEO, as well as to epistemological access within this space, was also reported. The women reported being silenced both in their homes as well as in the CEEO. In particular, they reported men as domineering and dismissive of women's contributions, as evidenced by men interrupting them and denying them the space to be heard. For example, two women described this silencing:

> Men do not want us to speak out […] they want themselves to speak out so that they are the ones who will be heard. (Mboneni II)

> At times, when you answer, before you finish, already men's hands will be up so as to snub off the point you have said. What you said is not listened to. (Sophie, FGD 1)

These findings resonate with those of Holmes and Stubbe (2003) in their study about feminine workplace stereotypes in New Zealand. The authors reported that men dominated public speaking activities by using more time to talk and by interrupting others (mostly women) in an aggressive manner.

The women in this study also reported that there was often an assault on their epistemic credibility during CEE activities. This silenced them and left them feeling less confident. Mboneni, in an individual interview, stated:

> It's that oppression […] by men, because sometimes a woman can stand up and speak out a point and it is said it [that point] is not correct. So how can we speak again when one of us has been cautioned?

Women's fear of making an input that was evaluated as a 'wrong' idea diminished their confidence in making substantive contributions and led to their decision to maintain silence. This has significant implications for women's participation in decision-making, with some studies attributing their absence from formal decision-making in spaces such as associations and committees to their subjugation by men and their powerlessness to make meaningful contributions (Marcoes, 2015). Linked to this, the United Nations Development Fund for Women sheds light on how the 'subordination of women and their lack of voice in the community lead to a culture of silence' (UNIFEM, 2010:11). This underscores the connectedness of culture, violence against women, shame, guilt, victim-blaming and consequent

silence. For example, women's inferior status and lack of social power often leads to them being abused, and they remain silent about this abuse because it is culturally sanctioned (Gender Equality Network, 2015).

Facilitating patriarchal hegemony

Findings from this study also suggest that the environmental education facilitators in this CEEO tended to privilege men over women in several ways. For example, notes from a participant observation field journal reveal the following:

> When a chart on ecological services was shown […] the facilitator has to show the chart first to the men. (PO 1, 20/09/2014)

> When the facilitator wanted the audience to taste the quality of the mopani worms, one cup of worms was given to the men first before it was passed to women. (PO 2, 17/10/2014)

> When a woman and a man raised their hands to respond, the facilitator said 'Let me take Mr Nare first'. (PO 8, 21/03/2015)

These excerpts suggest that the environmental education facilitators were themselves implicated in denying women the spaces for active participation and expression during CEE activities. By treating men as superior participants and privileging their voices over those of women, they reinforced the patriarchal values that inform relationships between men and women in the communities as well as in many CEE environments.

Positioning women as passive agents

The findings in this study suggest that, linked to their silencing because of unequal gender norms, the women were unable to influence decisions about activities and practices in the CEEO. The following excerpts illustrate this:

> We sit and listen, we are quiet while men finalise [activities] for us women. (Doublekick, II)

> Some women can do it [make decisions], have good ideas, but you will find that their ideas are not used. (Renaye, II)

Not only was the women's epistemic credibility denied, rendering them less knowledgeable, they were also seen as passive subjects within CEE spaces. This is evidenced by Sophie's remark during a focus group interview: '*They* [men] *do not want to use the ideas of a woman; women's contributions are taken lightly.*'

Thus, the unequal gender norms within this CEEO, which reinforced the patriarchal values and attitudes, particularly of male participants, silenced women, limited their ability to make choices and positioned them as passive agents within CEE. Such passive agency, which develops

when people's choices are constrained (Kabeer, 2005), generates low aspirations as well as feelings of accomplishment even when this involves fulfilling self-denigrating roles. This was evident in the following responses:

> I enjoy growing these vegetables [grown through CEEO activities […] if my child needs relish, he comes and collects. Given that had I not joined this project, I would not be in a position to assist him. (Smider, II)

> We were satisfied with growing vegetables and farming in the fields. We never thought of changing […] the duties were satisfactory. (Mboneni, II)

> Once [we were] involved in gardening, but we failed because we were promised that we would be given fencing material. (Siphiwe, FGD 4)

The women in this study valued the role of providing food security for their children. This underscores their unremunerated role in 'care work' (Ferrant, Pesando & Nowacka, 2014:1). People who work in the paid labour market (mostly men) are seen as *productive*, and their work is deemed valuable and worthy of recognition. People (women) who work in the unpaid labour market are regarded as *consumers*, and their work is deemed less valuable. This is in spite of the value of women's work, especially in food production, which, although it is largely unpaid, remains key to the well-being of the family (Asian Development Bank, 2013).

The women's lack of active agency in some instances prevented them from challenging the restrictive aspects of their roles in the CEEO (Kabeer, 2005). Their subaltern status (Spivak, 1988), based on, among other things, their perceived lack of the type of knowledge which was valued by the patriarchal order and their lack of voice, was rooted in their social, cultural and economic circumstances (Asian Development Bank, 2013). Because of their gendered marginalisation, and the fact that they had internalised their inferior status and lack of epistemic credibility in CEE, the women were unable to tap into their innovative and creative powers to address the challenges confronting the community. These factors coalesced to limit their vision for transformation and rendered them dependent on men for skills and resources (e.g. fencing).

Gendered teaching materials

An analysis of the teaching materials used by the CEE facilitators suggests that some of them reinforced the idea of women as passive agents. Two of the documents analysed illustrate the ways in which the materials were replete with evidence of women as passive agents. The first was a booklet titled 'Preventing Veld Fires'. The booklet shows women in the background as onlookers, while men are photographed in active roles, such as extinguishing fires using various methods (e.g. a drip torch). Some men were photographed teaching or demonstrating fire management activities. In the illustration showing villagers as attendees at the fire management course, men are seated in front while women are seated further back.

The second example is a booklet titled 'Growing Trees from Seeds and Seedlings', which depicts men as teachers in a garden (in the public domain). The men are demonstrating stages of

propagation of trees from cuttings and sowing of seeds. In contrast, a woman is pictured in one illustration holding a potted seedling, possibly displaying the final product from men's efforts.

These examples reinforce the notion that men are the masters and women the consumers of men's efforts. Men are portrayed as skilled, responsible for lifesaving activities and for conserving biodiversity. In comparison, women are shown as passive consumers or as only capable of performing low-skilled and menial tasks such as watering gardens or pushing wheelbarrows. While men are portrayed as engaged in productive work, which is deemed significant to the well-being of the community, women are shown performing work that is largely undervalued by the patriarchal, capitalist system. Without women participating equally and meaningfully in all CEE activities, the 'transformation of [the] social norms' (Asian Development Bank, 2013:35) that prevent their full and interactive participation will remain elusive.

Discussion and Conclusions

The findings from this study revealed that women attended CEEO meetings but operated at the nominal participation and passive participation levels. In Agarwal's (2001) typology, this reflects the narrowest spaces for participation, because the women were deemed to participate simply by attending meetings and passively listening to decisions, without being able to influence these decisions in any way. Their verbal contributions were thwarted in many ways, and, as a result, they were unable to propose or engage in new initiatives, or to meaningfully contribute to the CEEO activities. Therefore, no opportunity existed for them to engage in Agarwal's interactive participation, the broadest level of participation, where efficiency and equity could have been enhanced and possibilities for their empowerment could have been realised. The participants in this study could also be viewed as having participated according to Arnstein's (1969) first three levels of participation (manipulation, therapy, informing). For Khaledi *et al.* (2012), this signals non-participation.

Several factors constrained the women's meaningful participation in CEE activities: their fear of retribution, including violence, from men at home and in the CEEO; interruptions from men; being ignored by CEE facilitators and having their contributions dismissed as incorrect or inferior. In Plumwood's (1993) terms, this trivialising of women's contributions, or backgrounding, functions to render them as the 'Downs', while men are regarded as the 'Ups'. Women, as the 'Downs', were subaltern to men, the latter dominating CEEO activities. The female, as subaltern (Spivak, 1988), could neither speak nor be heard within this CEEO, and this led to the disabling of the women's agency. Specifically, gender inequality in and around the CEEO and its influence on the unequal status of men and women in these spaces, contributed to the notion that the domain of public participation, and in particular public speaking and decision-making, is solely reserved for men. These patriarchal values denied women's agency and epistemic privilege (Thuma, 2011). Their backgrounding (Plumwood, 1993) by the men and the CEEO facilitators perpetuated their silence and invisibility in environmental education activities.

Furthermore, the teaching materials used in the CEEO contributed to constraining women's participation in CEE activities. For example, the materials depict men as custodians

and producers of valuable knowledge and skills about environmental education, while women
are either depicted as non-participants, passive agents or are radically excluded from these
documents and illustrations. Further, women are portrayed as consumers of men's knowledge
and skills. Through the activities suggested and resources used (e.g. technology), the materials
reinforce gender stereotypes by depicting women in typical feminine roles that see them
as less able and less knowledgeable than men. In contrast, men are homogenised in typical
masculine roles that see them as more skilled and knowledgeable than women. This results
in the hyperseparation of men and women (Plumwood, 1993), and the exclusion of women
from meaningful participation in environmental activities. Lindemann (2012) explains this as
gendered socialisation, where men are constructed as having the ability to adapt rapidly and
successfully to changing environments, and their potential for making positive contributions
to the advancement of humankind is a 'natural' expectation. Women, however, are viewed as
being weaker, more vulnerable and without an authoritative status.

The findings from this study heighten the salience of gender within environmental
education spaces. They provide insights into the 'myriad manifestations of patriarchy and
gender oppression' (Mama, 2015:39) within the CEEO. By using an ecofeminist lens, the
findings highlight the role of patriarchy and gender inequality in constraining women's
participation in the CEEO. For example, the women's socialisation in their homes ensured
that they conformed to patriarchal values and maintained the stance of passive agent or
non-participant. In turn, by conforming to and reinforcing the same patriarchal values, the
facilitators and male participants further contributed to the silencing of women within the
CEEO. These values were further reinforced in the teaching materials used in CEE activities,
which constructed women as the 'Downs' and men as the 'Ups' in dualised pairs. This resulted
in women's voices being silenced and trivialised, and to their acquiescence to passive roles in
and around the CEEO.

However, while the CEE participation of the women in this study was largely constrained
by factors related to unequal gender norms, in some cases their perspectives revealed glimpses
of consciousness about their subaltern status and suppressed agency within the CEEO spaces.
For example, some viewed their contributions during CEE activities as useful and valuable,
even when these ideas were rejected by male participants and facilitators. This has implications
for CEE, which could focus on the value of dialogical praxis, where all participants have
equal opportunities to speak, listen and be heard. Such an interactive pedagogical setting,
which carefully considers the ideological, cultural and socio-political contexts of women's
oppression, can provide the platform for women's meaningful participation in CEEOs.

References

Agarwal, B. (2001). Participatory exclusions: Community forestry and gender: An analysis for South Asia and a conceptual framework. *World Development*, 29(10), 1623–1648.

Alsop, R., Bertelsen, M. & Holland, J. (2006). *Empowerment in practice: From analysis to implementation*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Arnstein, S.R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 35(4), 216–224.

Asian Development Bank. (2013). *Gender equality and food security: Women's empowerment as a tool against hunger.* Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank.

Benjamin, A.E. (2010). Women in community forestry organizations: An empirical study in Thailand. *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, 25, 62–68.

Boserup, E. (1970). *Woman's role in economic development*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Chifamba, E. (2013). Women Participation in Community Water Management Projects in Buhera, Ward 13, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Biological and Chemical Research*, 30(2), 581-597.

Chopra, K., Kadekodi, G.K. & Murty, M.N. (1990). *Participatory development: People and common property resource*. New Delhi: Sage.

Clarke, V. & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The psychologist*, 26(2), 120–123.

Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd edn). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davidson, S. (1998). Spinning the wheel of empowerment. *Planning 3*, 14-15. https://sarkissian.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/Davidson-Spinning-wheel-article1998.pdf, visited 22 April 2018.

Fazlul, H., Fazlur, R., Muhammed, N.M., Iffat, T., Muhammad, S. & Mehtab, A. (2016). Mountain women as a decisive factor in sustainable resource management and utilization: Observations from Roghani Valley Hindu Raj Mountains, Northern Pakistan. *Science International*, 28(2), 1575–1581.

Ferrant, G. Pesando, L.M. & Nowacka, K. (2014). Unpaid care work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes. Paris: OECD Development Centre. file:///C:/Users/mudalyr/Documents/Unpaid_care_work.pdf, visited 28 March 2018.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. (2011). *The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture.* Italy, Rome: FAO.

Foucault, M. (1984). Nietzsche, genealogy, history (trans. D. Bouchard & S. Simon). In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault reader.* New York: Pantheon. pp.76–100.

Gender Equality Network (2015). *Behind the silence: Violence against women and their resilience: Myanmar.* Yangon, Myanmar: Gender Equality Network.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Holmes, J. & Stubbe, M. (2003). 'Feminine' workplaces: Stereotype and reality. In J. Holmes & M. Meyerhoff (Eds.), *The handbook of language and gender*. Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 473–499.

Kabeer, N. (2005). Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal. *Gender and Development*, 13(1), 13–24.

Khaledi, K., Agahi, H. & Eskandari, F. (2012). Explaining rural women's participation in extension education program: Case Study of Sanandaj City. *Online Journal of Educational Research*, 1(3), 57–64.

Lindemann, H. (2012). The woman question in medicine: An update. *Hastings Center Report*, 42(3), 38–45.

Lorber, J. & Martin, P.Y. (2001). The socially constructed body: Insights from feminist theory. In P. Kivisto (Ed.), *Illuminating social life: Classical and contemporary theory revisited*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. pp.259–282.

Mai, Y.H., Mwangi, E. & Wan, M. (2011). Gender Analysis in forestry research: Looking back and thinking ahead. *The International Forestry Review*, Special Issue, 13(2), 245–258.

Mama, A. (2015). Beyond the frontiers: Feminist activism in the 'global' academy. *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, 9, 35–48.

Marcoes, L. (2015). *Achieving gender justice in Indonesia's forest and land governance sector: How civil society organisations can respond to mining and plantation industry impacts*. Jakarta, Indonesia: SETAPAK, The Asia Foundation.

Maxwell, J.A. (2012). The importance of qualitative research for causal explanation in education. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(8), 655–661.

McNay, L. (2016). Agency. In L. Disch & M. Hawkesworth (Eds), *The Oxford handbook of feminist theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp.39–60.

Molla, T. & Cuthbert, D. (2014). Qualitative inequality: Experiences of women in Ethiopian higher education. *Gender and Education*, 26(7), 759–775.

Patterson, M. (2009). Comprehensive examination in sociological theory. University of Toronto, Department of Sociology.

Plumwood, V. (1993). *Feminism and the mastery of nature.* London: Routledge.

Roy, B. (2014). Women's Participation in the Forest Governance: A Case Study of Buxa Tiger Reserve Forest. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 2(10), 48–59.

Sengwar, B. (2015). Society awareness as a strategy for conservation of natural resources. *Social Issues and environmental problems*, 3(9se), 2394–3629. http://granthaalayah.com/Articles/Vol3Iss9SE/09_IJRG15_S09_20.pdf, visited 23 April 2018.

Shandilya, K. (2014). Writing/reading the subaltern woman: Narrative voice and subaltern agency in Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August*. *Postcolonial Text*, 9(3). http://postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/viewFile/1877/1732, visited 19 April 2018.

Shil, S.C., Sarker, B.C., Akter, A. & Bakali, B. (2013). Environmental awareness among the industrial workers: A study in Tangail district, Bangladesh. *Journal of the Bangladesh Agricultural University,* 99(1), 159–164.

Sola, A.O. (2014). Environmental Education and Public Awareness. *Journal of Educational and Social Research,* 4(3), 333–337.

Spivak, G. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture.* Basingstoke: Macmillan Education. pp.24–28.

Sultana, F. (2014). Gendering climate change. Geographical insights. *The Professional Geographer*, 66(3), 372–381.

Thuma, A. (2011). Hannah Arendt, agency, and the public space. In M. Behrensen, L. Lee & A.S. Tekelioglue (Eds), *Modernities revisited* (vol. 29). Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows

Conferences. http://www.iwm.at/publications/5-juniour-visiting-fellowconferences/ andrea-thuma-2/, visited 20 September 2015.

UNESCO. (2005). United Nations decade of education for sustainable development draft: International implementation from scheme. http://www.unesco.org/education/desd, visited 30 June 2012.

UNESCO-UNEP (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation–United Nations Environment Programme). (1978). The Tbilisi declaration. *Connect*, 3(1), 1–8.

UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women). (2010). *Ending violence against women and girls: UNIFEM strategy and information kit*. Fiji: UNIFEM Pacific.

Van Maanen, J. (2011). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography* (2nd edn). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). (2012). *Powerful synergies. Gender equality, economic development and environmental sustainability*. New York: Graphic Service Bureau Inc.

Unterhalter, E. & Dorward, A. (2013). New MDGs, Development Concepts, Principles and Challenges in a Post–2015 World. *Social Indicators Research*, 113(2), 609–625.

Warren, K.J. (1990). The power and the promise of ecological feminism. *Environmental Ethics*, 12(2), 125–146.

Wolpe, A. (1998). 'Where angels fear to tread': Feminism in South Africa. In J. Mouton, J. Muller, P. Franks & T. Sono (Eds), *Theory and method in South African human sciences research: Advances and innovations*. Cape Town: HSRC Press. pp.85–104.

World Bank. (n.d.). Gender at work: A companion to the *World development report on jobs*. http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/GenderAtWork_web.pdf, visited 19 April 2018.