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**THE ANALYSIS OF THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF
WOMEN, POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT
IN THE DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE**

Tara Pratt

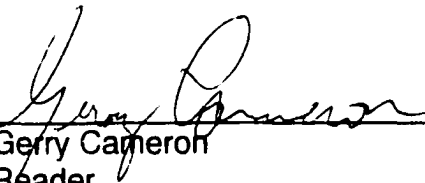
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Halifax, Nova Scotia


Signatures of the Examining Committee



Dr. Anne Marie Dalton
Supervisor



Gerry Cameron
Reader



Dr. Najma Sharif
Reader



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The Analysis of the Interconnectedness of Women, Population and Environment in the Development Discourse

Tara D. Pratt

September 14, 1999

ABSTRACT

The role women have played historically and still today within the web of interaction of population and environment has been neglected or misinterpreted. This thesis attempts to identify the strands of the discourse, which ought to move forward in order to promote women's agency and empowerment within the issue of women, population and environment. It is contended in the thesis that in order to effectively shift the debate to a more empowering and women centred perspective, one must look at the issue of environment, population and women from a holistic perspective, incorporating all the factors, which affect each element of the debate. Ecofeminism offers such a holistic and agency oriented analysis of the relationship and as this school evolves, it ought to provide the foundation for a debate that will be geared to the empowerment and improved agency of women of the South.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

In order to see the elements of women, environment and population in the proper context, they can not be examined in isolation but within the global reality and rhetoric in which they are often discussed. Furthermore, the conversation of women, environment and population must be understood in the larger context of development paradigms. "Knowing that the major causes of environmental degradation are industrial and military pollutants, toxic wastes, and economic systems that exploit and misuse nature and people, we are outraged by suggestions that women's fertility rates (euphemistically called population pressures) are to blame" (World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet 1991, 8). The groundwork is laid for the re-emergence of top-down, demographically driven population policies and programs that are deeply disrespectful of the basic human rights of women if left unchallenged. Such top-down programmes and policies have been the chosen development path until recently. It is therefore important to address alternative analyses of the issue of population, environment and women such as from an ecofeminist perspective and specifically from the viewpoint of the women of the developing nations themselves. Until the question

of population is considered in a holistic manner, women will continue to bear the brunt of the population and environment dilemma.

1.2. Problem Considered

The link between population growth and environmental degradation is without a doubt controversial. For some, population is the central cause of environmental degradation and for others population plays only a marginal role. One side of the population/environment debate of the 1990s is rooted in the conviction that population growth in the South is the primary cause of worldwide environmental degradation, leading policy makers to continue to cite women's fertility as a barrier to sustainable development. (World Bank Environmentally Sustainable Development Studies and Monograph Series and United Nations documents on population and environment to be cited.) The rationale for population control in the 1990s has moved away from the traditional economic development argument to a case for environmental sustainability. This is evident in the policies of various international organizations. The issue of environmental sustainability was brought to the forefront of the development discourse with the Bruntland Report of 1987 and as a result shifted the attention towards the negative impacts of development on the environment. (Our Common Future, 1987)

In contrast, Northern and Southern ecofeminists believe that beneath this new focus of the environment are familiar and enduring racist, sexist and colonial biases representative of top-down population policies. From this perspective the

discourse on the prime responsibility of population explosion for environmental destruction is false as it is based on a number of patriarchal and eurocentric assumptions and theories which are untenable. "To focus on population as the cause of environmental destruction is erroneous at two levels: 1) it blames the victims – mainly women; and 2) by failing to address economic insecurity and by denying rights to survival, the current policy prescriptions avoid the real problem. False perceptions lead to false solutions" (Mies and Shiva, 1993 p.285). The ecofeminist school of thought instead looks beyond population and lays blame for environmental degradation on the wasteful consumption of the North, the patriarchal top down approaches to development, and the political-economic environments, which prevail in many developing countries. Ecofeminists of the South, in particular, view violence against nature as intrinsic to the dominant industrial development model and therefore look beyond population and question the patriarchal institutions and attitudes that ultimately oppress women. (Mies and Shiva, 1993)

This thesis will examine the debate as to what role women of developing countries play in the equation of population and environmental degradation. Although population pressure may well be a significant factor in environmental degradation, the role women have played historically and still today within this web of interaction has been neglected or misinterpreted. This thesis will attempt to show that women have been targeted as the primary actors of population growth within the South and ultimately the primary destructors of the environment. Therefore, policy driven by this approach is in fact ideological and

furthermore a better analysis and understanding of women's reproductive role and role as agents in issues of environmental sustainability can arrive at an approach that will address the interconnectedness of population, women and the environment in a much more holistic and effective manner.

1.3. Methodology

This thesis will be a theoretical treatment of the interwoven issue of women, environment and population through the examination and critique of the insights of feminists, ecofeminists and the international community in order to determine a direction in which to deal with the issue effectively. The thesis will examine the ecofeminist perspective by analyzing the principal approaches as represented by Southern ecofeminists Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, Bina Agarwal and Northern ecofeminists Carolyn Merchant, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Judith Plant. The documents to be examined include Mies and Shiva's *Ecofeminism*, Shiva's *Staying Alive*, Merchant's *The Global Ecological Revolution: An Ecofeminist Perspective*, Radford Ruether's *New women/New Earth*, and Plant's *Healing the Wounds; the Promise of Ecofeminism*. Also included are documents relevant to international conferences and meetings portraying the ideologies behind actions and policy prescriptions regarding the issue of women, environment and population. Finally, this thesis will examine the implementation of such policies, approaches and ideologies in a short case study of Zimbabwe.

This is intended to be a library thesis with the majority of resources being secondary in nature. In addition to using secondary materials, I will use primary sources such as documentation from international conferences and meetings and various government policy documents where appropriate. This thesis includes three equally important themes: women's role in population growth, women's role in the ecological sustainability of development, and the underlying assumptions that lead to policies affecting women. These three themes are intricately connected and I will attempt to address each of them and its key position in development. In order to demonstrate the thesis hypothesis, the issue of population, environment and women will be examined in the context of external factors such as structural adjustment policies, international population control policies and consumption patterns of the North.

The thesis will consist of five chapters. Chapter One as stated above, will introduce the problem and the method in which the issue will be examined and criticized. In conclusion of this chapter there is a clarification of terms relevant to the literature.

Chapter Two includes a review of the literature on the major positions. This chapter will also examine whether a bias exists and if so, the nature and shape of it with regard to the issue being addressed within the international arena. This chapter will document how the issue of population, women and the environment has been dealt with on the international scene, particularly at The International Conference on Population in Mexico in 1984, the 44th World Health Assembly in 1989, the 1991 World Women's Conference for a Healthy Planet,

the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995 in Beijing. This chapter will examine the outcomes of these particular gatherings and how the views of women, environment and population have changed as the goals of development have shifted over time.

Chapter Three will examine the influence that gender roles have on how women, population and environmental degradation interact. I will give a general overview of WID, WAD, GAD and WED and look at how the perspectives of women, the notion of agency of women and the nature of it have changed within the development discourse. Data will be collected on what women's roles include, their importance in the population, environment equation, and to what extent they have been left out of the analysis and discourse. The role women play as environmental managers and their access to resources or lack thereof will also be examined. This chapter will also look at the issues of women's empowerment and participation, equity and equality, the importance of reproductive rights and how these issues relate to the women, population and environmental debate.

Chapter Four will consist of a short case study of the issues of women roles, reproduction and the environment in Zimbabwe. This chapter will examine the shift in agency throughout the last 30 years of women's agency by looking at the traditional and legislated laws. This chapter will then examine population

issues including education, health and family planning followed by the policies that have been implemented in order to address these issues.

Chapter Five, the concluding chapter, will put forth the strands of the debate which seem to be going forward and the ideologies and policies which continue to be a hindrance to the advancement of women. Also included will be suggestions for change and what ought to happen in order to attain greater agency for women.

1.4. Clarification of Terms

There are many terms used within the development discourse that are value-laden and have underlying meanings depending on where, who and when they are used. Terms such as South, Third World, underdeveloped, developing and their counterparts, North, First World and developed all have various connotations, many of them negative. While some of these terms will require further clarification later in the thesis, it is helpful to indicate here the general meaning of these terms. With regard to the terminology used to label the less developed countries in the world, in this thesis I will use the "South." I use "North" to refer to the more developed countries. I have chosen the general geographical regions as to avoid judgment regarding what development may be. I am aware that each label is weighed down by negative connotations; therefore I would like to consider these words as qualifiers not necessarily as descriptives of a region's development.

The term sustainable development will be used as introduced in the report *Our Common Future*, based on the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (popularly known as the Brundtland Commission). The definition of sustainable development put forth in the report is as follows:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED 1987, 43).

Although this thesis is not primarily a critique of sustainable development, it would be misleading to examine the interaction of population, women and the environment outside the discourse of sustainability. The use of the term sustainable, outside of reference to the WCED, will refer to the limited impact of human action the environment can withstand. Included in this discourse is the notion of carrying capacity of a given environment. This generally refers to the number of people that can be supported by the Earth or a specific ecosystem.

Although the ecofeminist movement is not entirely focused on population and/or development, the views of ecofeminists are critical in the examination of population, environment and women. Ecofeminism encompasses an awareness of the oppression and violence against both women and nature. In regard to population, an ecofeminist perspective "is not to look at reproduction in isolation, but to see it in the light of men-women relations, the sexual division of labour, sexual relations, and the overall economic, political and social situation, all of which are present, are influenced by patriarchal and capitalist ideology and practice" (Mies and Shiva 1993, 294).

This thesis will use the term agency to refer to the power of a woman and her ability to take action in order to better her position within society. Agency is the result of a woman being empowered through legislation, acceptance, and equal access to resources, education and training.

I use the term “women” instead of the more encompassing term gender as I want to specifically point out the material limitations, impacts and issues that are particular to actual women in diverse contexts. Gender is a more abstract term inclusive of feminine and masculine notions and roles. I will discuss the notion of gender in Chapter Three so as to situate women’s roles within the gender context.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In order to understand how the integrated issue of population, environmental degradation and women came to the forefront of development discourse, it is important to examine the diversity of opinions, theories and conceptual approaches which characterize this discourse. This section of the thesis will outline the various strands, which have historically and currently shaped the thinking on this topic. Although these different perspectives have been presented separately by the authors Baudot and Moomaw in their book *The Population, Environment, Security Equation*, in many cases there is overlap. The perspectives include the linear views, multiplicative perspectives, mediating perspectives, and the development-dependency perspective. (Baudot and Moomaw 1997)

2.1.1. Linear Views: Malthus, Boserup and Ehrlich

Neither Malthus nor Boserup specifically addresses population-environment relations but rather the narrow topics of food production and land use however, implications and inferences on the general linkages between

resources and population can be made. Malthus and Boserup represent the two dominant historical viewpoints within the topic both emphasizing “the reciprocal, linear, and direct relationships which exist between population and their environment” (Baudot and Moomaw 1997, 2).

It was at the time that the world reached its first billion, in the nineteenth century, that Thomas Malthus put forth his ideas on population that “whereas population increases geometrically, food production increases arithmetically, thus raising the whole question of balance between population and natural resources” (Rodda 1993, 38). Malthusian theory, which was formulated prior to the agricultural revolution is based on the premise that resources such as land are fixed and “that growth of population always tends to outstrip the productive capabilities of resources” (2).

Malthus believed that ‘positive’ checks such as famine and increased mortality would control the population and that those who had no opportunity to actively participate in production were surplus population with no right to exist. Malthus’ idea was “based on what demographers have later called the concept of ‘natural fertility’; that is, uncontrolled human fertility, with no recourse to contraception or birth control, implying a purely unconscious, biological process” (Mies and Shiva 1993, 286). What Malthus and his supporters ignored was the fact that from ancient time women, in the North and the South, have known and practiced methods and techniques of birth control. To conclude, Malthus linear theory suggests that the demands by population on resources place direct

restriction on their availability and that in turn, resources and the availability of them, place a direct restriction on population growth.

Malthus, writing prior to modernization, could not envision the advances in technology that accompanied this period. On the other hand, Esther Boserup wrote following the agricultural and industrial revolutions and took into account these advances. Boserup suggested the linear relationship was such that “population growth and resulting increased population density ‘induce’ technological changes, for example the use of ploughs or fertilizer, which allow food production to keep pace with population growth” (Baudot and Moomaw 1997, 2). In regard to women, Boserup’s *Women’s Role in Economic Development* (1970) brought to the forefront the colonial and postcolonial prejudices against women in the advancement, introduction and training in new technology. Thus, she claimed that the benefits of modernization failed to improve southern women’s lives.

In more recent times the alarm over population and environment stems from such volatile works as Dr. Paul Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* written in 1968. He addressed the issue with a stern warning of impending doom to the entire world, if action was not taken immediately in order to bring population growth under control and simultaneously increase food production. As the issue gained public attention in the early 1960s, “it became possible to question growth, to suggest that DNA was greater than GNP, to predict that man had enough genius to require that science and technology be put to good purpose.

He could limit his numbers” (Ehrlich 1968, 14). Ehrlich inferred that there was a need to control population in order to halt the degradation of the environment.

In *The Population Bomb*, countries are divided into two categories: those with rapid growth rates, and those with relatively slow growth rates. The first category makes up approximately two-thirds of the world population and coincides closely with the countries known as “undeveloped countries.”

(Ehrlich 1968)¹ Ehrlich predicts that if humans cannot reverse the trend of population growth and stagnant or falling food production, the result will be mass starvation of those in underdeveloped countries. He estimated at the time that “of these poor, a minimum of three and one-half million will starve to death this year, mostly children” (17). Ehrlich stipulated that the limit in population size, which the earth’s ecosystems could withstand, was and is affected by the technology of the day; that is, technologies referring to the advancement in science that can counter-react the negative affects of human impact on the environment (20). This issue of ecological and cultural appropriate technology will be examined further in Chapter Four.

2.1.2. Multiplicative Perspectives: the ‘IPAT’ Equation.

This perspective views population size in a multiplicative way combined with other factors, which create impacts on the environment. (Baudot and Moomaw 1997) These other factors include the levels of consumption and

¹ Ehrlich uses the term “undeveloped” countries to refer to the countries which his thesis will refer to as “south” or “developing.”

technology. The most frequently used multiplier approach is the I=PAT equations. Total environmental impacts (I) are seen as a product of the population size (P), the level of per capita consumption (A), and the level of technology (T) (Baudot and Moomaw 1997, 3). The I=PAT equation implies that although the above factors might be considered independent causes of environmental deterioration, it is the effect of the combination of these factors, which is important. The main problem with this equation is that it leaves out the issue of social, economic, and political power and the systems by which these power relations are enforced. For instance environmentalist H. Patricia Hynes notes how "P is gender, race and class-blind, all but ignoring different people's differing impacts on the environment. Moreover, it neglects the crucial factor of human agency by viewing all humans as *takers from* rather than *enhancers of* the natural environment" (Hynes cited in Visvanathan, Duggan, Nisonoff and Wiegersma 1997, 295). "P" also ignores population distribution, which is crucial in determining impacts on specific environments.

Shaw (1989) puts forth an alternative scheme in which the interaction of these factors is further examined. Shaw advocates that "in the case of environmental degradation, consumption and technology are ultimate causes while population is an aggravating factor which increases the intensity of impacts which ultimate causes have on the environment" (Shaw 1989 cited in Baudot and Moomaw 1997, 3). Although this multiplicative perspective is used widely in the determining of environmental impacts of various factors, it is not gender desegregated and therefore does not offer any further insight as to women's role

within this equation. Coupled with the lack of gender consideration, approaches such as the I=PAT equation reduce the complexity of environmental impacts to that of quantifiable generalities. Therefore they ignore the local-level characteristics of natural resource usage which may be key to understanding the relationship and linkages between population and the environment.

2.1.3. Mediating Perspectives

This perspective goes beyond the quantifiable factors that result in environmental damage, to include the context in which the equation or relationship of people and environment occurs. Mediating perspectives emphasize that social, cultural and institutional factors, such as policy and the state, play a mediating role in determining population-environment relationships and that this influence varies at different levels of society. (Baudot and Moomaw 1997) In comparison to a linear model such as Malthus', this line of thought advocates that the impact of population on the environment is not linear but in fact determined by socio-economic and institutional factors which filter and alter the relationship between population and the environment. This relationship can vary with the introduction of new technology or with a change in social or political structure within a society.

2.1.4. Development–Dependency Perspectives

The Development-Dependency perspectives meld all of the social, cultural and institutional factors that influence the population and environment

relationship into the larger concept of development and focuses on the way in which the development processes mediate population and environment relations (Baudot and Moomaw, 1997). The emphasis is placed on the development policies and trends that have kept the south dependent on the north through such mechanisms as exploitation and export of natural resources. Baudot and Moomaw document that “this approach further suggests that even major global environmental problems (depletion of ozone, greenhouse effects, toxic waste accumulation and loss of biodiversity) are direct results of the prevailing model of development” (4). Ecofeminists are situated within this line of thought although they examine the effects of these models on the relationship of women and the environment in particular. Ecofeminist writing will be further examined later in this chapter.

2.2. Conversation within the International Arena

The various factors affecting women and the particular roles they play in the perceived relationship of population and environment have been addressed at many different international gatherings. Furthermore, how these factors have been dealt with has shifted over time.

With regard to women and population, the shift in thinking has been parallel to how women have been addressed in the general development discourse. The more recent conferences and meetings have an empowerment of women focus, in comparison to earlier gatherings that seem to be representative

of the aid mentality of the Women In Development (WID)² school of thought. In these earlier conferences, such as 1974 World Population Conference in Bucharest, the perspective was that development was the best contraceptive and that the availability of family planning programmes would ensure a decrease in population.

During the time of the Bucharest conference, the principal debate was centred on the impact of poverty on population growth. On the one hand was the populist view that perceived economic growth as both a necessary and sufficient condition for the reduction of population growth when combined with the availability of contraceptive methods. It was believed that an increase in per capita income would generate the demand for family planning methods. On the other hand, the developmentalist view generally discredited the belief that economic growth was ultimately the solution to development. This school of thought held that income increases were insufficient and believed that what was required was an increase in health and education facilities. While this developmentalist view recognized the importance of family planning, it placed its emphasis on increasing the demand for family planning through the improved accessibility of health care and education particularly to women. This view of women as potential decision-makers whose capabilities in planning a family and managing child-care, particularly children's health, could be enhanced through greater education, gained momentum following the Bucharest conference.

² WID, WAD and GAD will be examined in detail in Chapter Three.

The International Conference on Population in Mexico in 1984 emphasized the freedom of choice of couples in planning family size. This conference acknowledged that women rarely have decision making power with regard to this matter. Therefore, the Mexico City Declaration on Population and Development recommended “swift action must be taken to assist women in attaining full equality with men in the social, political and economic life of their countries. To achieve this goal, it is necessary for women and men to share, jointly, responsibilities in areas such as family life, childcare and family planning” (Dankelman and Davidson 1989,134). This call for equality is an underpinning of the WID approach to women and development. WID focused on how women could be better integrated into existing development initiatives but the reasons behind women’s subordination and lack of empowerment were not questioned.

In 1989, the 44th World Health Assembly passed a series of resolutions to further strengthen the existing mandate of women’s health. *Resolution 1* took a broader look at women’s health and addressed the many factors affecting women’s health such as education, reproductive and family planning issues, and income generating opportunities. This resolution urged member states to “accelerate the implementation of the measures for the improvement of the health status of women, their economic and social status, and their quality of life and for their full and equal participation in all aspects of national health and development activities” (United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development-Gender Working Group 1995, 147). Women’s economic and

social status was addressed but the issues underlying their inability to participate equally were not challenged.

Up to this period, conferences and the international development players focused on the necessary actions to decrease population. In general, the overall recommendations were to increase the education of women on the benefits of fewer children and increase the availability of contraceptives. Equality for women both within and outside the family home was a goal, without any examination of the restrictions or barriers women face in achieving such equality.

The environmentalist concern over population predates the debate sparked by the UN Conference in Environment and Development held in Rio in 1992. The most influential early documents were the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* and as mentioned earlier, Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*. The main goal of the Rio conference was to:

find an equitable balance between the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations and to lay the foundation for a global partnership between developed and developing countries as well as between Governments and sector of civil society based on common understanding of shared needs and interests (INSTRAW 1997, 1).

In addition, the Rio conference, also known as the Earth Summit, was striving for the establishment of "new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of co-operation among states, key sectors of societies and people working towards international agreements which respect the interests of all and

protect the integrity of the global environmental and developmental system” (United Nations 1992, preamble). This conference brought to the forefront a programme for action for the 21st century, *Agenda 21*. This document was a long-term plan for environment and development action, addressing social and economic issues of development such as population control, alleviation of poverty, and development assistance. This plan also addressed the protection of nature and the management of natural resources; the role of NGOs and other social groups; and the financial means for implementation including technology transfer, environmental education and new institutions required (Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler and Wieringa 1994, 127). During the Rio conference it was also made abundantly clear that the “population problem of the world is equally one of over-consumption and the accumulation of wastes in the industrial countries” (The Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life 1996, vi).

In regard to population, *Agenda 21* calls for a better understanding of population dynamics and the full integration of these dynamics into national planning, policy and decision making. *Agenda 21* appeals to a holistic approach that addresses all facets of human development, ultimately resulting in a blueprint on how to make development socially, economically and environmentally sustainable (Pietila and Vickers 1994, 136). Within the area of health care, emphasis is placed on meeting primary healthcare needs, controlling communicable diseases, and mobilization of countries to prevent HIV infection. With regard to women, the *Agenda* calls for full and equal participation of women

in all development activities and particularly environmental management (Ecoforum 1992, 3). Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration states “women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development” (United Nations 1992). To ensure this participation, the *Agenda* calls on governments to review and remove constitutional and legal constraints on women, improve their health care and educational opportunities and involve them in decision-making bodies. *Agenda 21* represents a clear advancement from the “add women and stir” school of thought of the earlier days.

It is important to note at this point that running parallel to these various international conferences, in particular United Nations conferences, were several meetings and gatherings organized by NGOs, youth, women's organization and other specific interest groups. These gatherings did and still do provide important opportunities for members of all sectors of societies to express their independent views of the issues being addressed at the larger summit. An example of this was the construction of a Global Forum at the Earth Summit at Rio, which was a result of the work of the Brazilian NGO Forum, the Centre for Our Common Future and the International Facilitating Committee. This Global Forum provided participating groups and individuals with a variety of services and facilities to aid in their optimum participation in such a gathering.

Individual NGOs or NGO conglomerates produced documents or treaties that detailed a problem and outlined plans of action which were then presented to the International UN gathering. For instance, within Rio's Global Forum, the

women's pavilion Planeta Femea, organized by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the Brazilian Women's Coalition featured workshops, plenaries and panels on diverse topics pertaining to women such as population, trade, environment and health. Out of the Planeta Femea came two treaties, a NGO treaty on Population, Environment and Development and A Global Women's Treaty for NGOs Seeking a Just and Healthy Planet, which were later submitted, to the International NGO Forum. As stated in Ecoforum:

These treaties are intended as open documents ready to shift and grow as the need arises. They should be understood as processes as well as action plans, where some of the output will be intangibles such as growth in trust, an increased capacity for NGOs to act collectively, and for NGOs to act with due accountability to evident and vocal constituencies (Ecoforum 1992,11).

These treaties encourage the cooperation of NGOs and allow the path, which they are following to accompany the issues that are of importance in a given time.

Also, in preparation of the Earth Summit, WEDO held a conference referred to as World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet in Miami Florida in November 1991. The 1500 female participants from 83 countries crafted the *Women's Action Agenda 21* which was a consensus statement by women from various races, geographical regions, classes and cultures, analyzing the global environment/development problem and the steps that must be taken from within all spheres of societies by both male and females to assure that women have an

equal say in decisions that ultimately affect the earth's fate (Women Making a Difference 1998).

The *Women's Action Agenda 21* addressed a wide range of issues in reference to women's links to the environment. With regard to women's rights, population policies and health, the participants addressed the matter of reproductive rights and choice with emphasis that both are basic rights of an individual. This agenda takes a holistic approach to the issues of women, population and environmental degradation. It calls on policy-makers to recognize that raising economic, health, education, and social status of women coupled with increasing accessibility of women-centred and women managed comprehensive reproductive health care and family planning are essential factors in the ending of environmental degradation. This document was presented to the UNCED Preparatory Committee meetings and also directly to the UN conference in Rio as recommendations to reflect women's views. The *Women's Action Agenda 21* "is meant as a challenge to women to work together to create a safe and sustainable future" (The Women's Action Agenda 21 1998, 1).

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the third in a series of conferences on population issues organized by the United Nations, was held in Cairo in September of 1994. The ICPD sparked a new era in the discourse over population. "Whereas the two preceding conferences (Bucharest, 1974 and Mexico, 1984) had witnessed a confrontation between the South and the North, a consensus seems to have emerged on the road to Cairo" (Amalric and Banuri 1994, 691). During the Bucharest conference the North was

pushing for the acceptance and implementation of population control policies in the South, which was strongly resisted by the Southern countries who shifted the debate to larger development issues. Ten years later in Mexico, the protagonists had shifted sides. The United States was no longer the leader in promoting population control policies due in part to pressure from strong anti-abortion groups. Conversely, many southern countries had begun to emphasize the need and the important role of population policies, and were now turning to the North for financial support in this effort.

In Bucharest and in Mexico City, there were heated debates on how to slow population growth down; quantifiable solutions were the aim. At those conferences some participants advocated coercive measures to limit family size where as others decried family planning and instead looked at the issue from a 'development is the best contraceptive' perspective. In contrast, delegates at Cairo in September of 1994 seemed to have been in agreement on a middle ground.

The representatives of 184 nations at the Cairo conference negotiated and approved *The Programme of Action*, which was a "20-year programme of action to address the problems of limited choice, rapid population growth, inequality and limited development" (The Rockefeller Foundation 1998, 23). One of the main goals of the Programme of Action was to make family planning universally available by 2015 as part of a broadened approach to reproductive health and rights. The goals and objectives of the *Programme of Action* were built on and in continuity with *World Population Plan of Action*, adopted in Bucharest in 1974,

the recommendations adopted at the Mexico conference, and the outcomes of the Conference on Environment and Development in Rio. However, there was advancement in the thinking about the issue of population.

Within the *Programmes of Action* a new strategy was put forth in that the emphasis was on the “integral linkages between population and development.” The focus was “meeting the needs of individual women and men, rather than on achieving demographic targets” (ICPD 1994, 1). This conference has been seen as a shift in the way in which population issues are addressed from that of a quantitative approach to one which included more holistic and aggregated people centred approach. This approach placed population within a web of the interconnected issues of equality, women’s empowerment, patterns of consumption and threats to the environment.

At the end of June 1999 there will be a three-day Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in order to complete an ICPD+5 review. This gathering will assess progress achieved and constraints faced in trying to implement the Cairo *Programme of Action*. I was fortunate to attend the first in a series of public consultations organized by Action Canada for Population and Development in order to organize a working paper on the concerns and recommendations of Canadians to be presented at the Special Session. Unfortunately, in all of the four priority issues identified for the forum; Health and Mortality, Reproductive Health and rights, Population and Sustainable Development, and Migration, it was found that the Canadian government had not only fallen short of its Cairo goals and promises, but has even digressed on

many issues. It remains to be seen whether this is also a more global phenomenon.

The ICPD conference was then followed by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in September 1995, which was attended by 6,000 delegates from 189 countries. The role of women was once again addressed as integral and crucial to the advancement of sustainable development. Beijing's "*Platform for Action* is an agenda for women's empowerment" (United Nations 1996, 17). This agenda calls for the removal of barriers and conditions that restrict women's advancement and inhibit the acknowledgment of their human rights. The *Platform for Action* builds on *Agenda 21's* recognition of the vital role of women in achieving sustainable development inclusive of having complete control over their own fertility and empowerment to achieve equality. It was agreed upon by policy makers from the world over that both family planning and social and economic development are necessary in order for countries to avoid environmental degradation, achieve sustainable rates of population growth and improve human rights (Riley1997, 37). Although the links between population and environment were not directly addressed, the central role that women play in managing natural resources was examined.

The process of linking population and sustainable development in national planning and policy has been slow to evolve. Out of the 168 countries that submitted national reports to the Cairo conference three out of every four of these acknowledged the links between population and socio-economic development. Two out of these three were concerned about the difficulties for

social services in keeping up with population growth. Unfortunately, less than half mentioned links between population and environment. (UNFPA 1997, 33)

These conferences and meetings are relevant to this thesis because they deal with the themes: women, population and the environment. The plans of action that these events produced are important because they have been agreed upon and signed by the heads of governments of most nations. By signing these documents, the governments of the world have legitimized the issues and pledged their support to work towards a solution. Unfortunately, the pledging of support does not always result in a carry through of promises.

The continuation of these conferences may be crucial to the advancement and clarification of the environmental, population and development debate. The focus of societal issues brought forth by individuals, governments and especially NGOs at such gatherings can only prove to advance the concerns and accelerate the interactions between governments and civil society in search of a holistic remedy. However, their effectiveness in terms of enforcement will be further examined.

As they stand the documents do show that the manner of addressing women's roles shifted over time. To summarize, international development bodies have moved from a 'helping women' perspective to acknowledging women's roles in meeting basic needs to ultimately valuing and empowering women as essential agents of change. Parallel to this, the issue of population has shifted from that of development being the best contraceptive to acknowledging a link between health, particularly that of children and women, to

population. At this stage women were still viewed as recipients and not as agents. From this point there was a call on the international scene for women's control over decisions affecting population and environment. This managerial role within this realm will be further exemplified in Chapter Three.

2.3. Ecofeminism

More recently there has been a growth and expansion of literature and action surrounding the issues of women, nature, and oppression from the ecofeminist school of thought. Ecofeminism refers to a significant stream within the feminist movement, consisting of a range of theoretical positions that rely on the assumption that there are critical connections between the domination of nature and of women, the connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice and the belief that there is a special strength and integrity in every living thing.

Ecofeminism grew out of various social movements – the feminist, peace and the ecology movements of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The term was first introduced in the mid-1970s by a French feminist writer, Francois d'Eaubonne. She accused what she referred to as 'the male system' for the overpopulation and the destruction of the environment. (Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler, and Wieringa 1994, 61) This accusation laid the groundwork for a more women centred examination of these issues.

It is important to clarify the diverse strands of ecofeminism in order to understand the varied assumptions, prescriptions and agents for change. Liberal, cultural, social and socialist feminism have all been concerned with improving the

human/nature relationship and each has contributed to various ecofeminist perspectives.

(A) Liberal Ecofeminism

Liberal feminism is rooted in the theory of liberalism which assumes that capitalism is the optimal economic structure for human progress and that humans are rational agents who maximize their own self interest. It accepts the egocentric ethic that the optimal society results when each individual maximizes her productive potential. Thus what is good for each individual is good for society as a whole.

Historically, liberal feminists have argued that women do not differ from men as rational agents but that exclusion from educational and economic opportunities have prevented them from realizing their own potential in all spheres of life. Therefore, liberal ecofeminists argue that given equal educational opportunities to become scientists, natural resource managers, regulators, lawyers and legislators, women, like men, can contribute to the improvement of the environment and the conservation of natural resources. Working within the parameters of mainstream governing structures, liberal ecofeminists view better science, conservation, and laws as the proper approaches to resolving environmental problems.

(B) Cultural Ecofeminism

Cultural ecofeminism grew out of cultural feminism of the late 1960's and 70's. Cultural ecofeminism is a response to the perception that women and nature have been mutually associated and devalued. Sherry Ortner's 1974 article "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture," put forth the problem that motivates many ecofeminists. She argued that, cross-culturally and historically women have been seen as closer to nature because of their physiology, psychology, and social roles. The basic assumption of cultural ecofeminism is that human nature is grounded in human biology. Sex/gender relations give men and women different power bases.

Cultural ecofeminism is very critical of the advancement of male oriented science and technology. Stemming from this anti-science, anti-technological stand point; cultural ecofeminists celebrate the relationship between women and nature through the revival of ancient rituals centred on goddess worship, the moon, animals and the female reproductive system. Therefore, growth in spirituality is seen as an agent for both personal and social change.

Cultural ecofeminism does have its critics. Feminist Susan Prentice argues that cultural ecofeminism assumes that all relationships that women have with nature are good and all relations that men have with nature are bad; therefore excluding men from developing an ethic of caring for nature. Secondly, this perspective of ecofeminism fails to tackle the role capitalism plays and by lacking in this analysis, it cannot prescribe an effective strategy for change.

Finally, it does not deal with the issues of poverty and racism which are problems experienced by many women around the world.

(C) Social and Socialist Ecofeminism

In comparison to cultural ecofeminism, social and socialist ecofeminism are based on socioeconomic analysis that treats nature and human nature as socially constructed, rooted in an analysis of race, class, and gender. Social ecofeminism stated by Janet Biehl “accepts the basic tenet of social ecology, that the idea of dominating nature stems from domination of human by human. Only ending all systems of domination makes possible an ecological society, in which no states or capitalist economies attempt to subjugate nature, in which all aspects of human nature – including sexuality and the passions as well as that rationality- are freed” (Merchant 1992, 194). Social ecofeminism differs from the spiritually oriented cultural ecofeminism in that it strives to restructure the oppressions imposed on women by various cultural, social and political structures and norms such as marriage, the nuclear family, the capitalists state, and patriarchal religion. Social ecofeminism advocates the liberation of women through the overturning of the social and economic hierarchies that in their view turns all aspect of life into a market society that today even invades the womb. Ultimately, they envision women emerging as free participants in public life.

Socialist ecofeminism is not yet seen as a movement but rather a feminist version of socialist ecology that makes the reproduction, rather than production, central to their concept of a sustainable and just world. It assumes that

nonhuman nature is the material basis of all of life. Nature is viewed as an active subject, not a passive object to be dominated, and humans must develop sustainable and healthy relations with it. A socialist ecofeminist perspective suggests social actions that will lead to the sustainability of life and a just society. Ultimately, socialist ecofeminism or yet the feminist transformation of social ecology would reverse the priorities of capitalism, making production secondary to reproduction and ecology.

2.3.1. Northern Ecofeminists

Early Northern ecofeminists such as Carolyn Merchant and Rosemary Radford Ruether were pioneers in attempting to explain the role in which women play in connection with the environment. The issue of population was not a key concern for these early ecofeminists. Their main concern was the uncovering of the historical and current perceptions of women's association with the nature/culture dualism and the oppression both of women and nature.

(A) Carolyn Merchant

Carolyn Merchant in her book entitled *The Death of Nature* centred on the key concept of woman's maternal role and argues that the ancient identification of nature with a 'nurturing mother' links women's history with the history of how the environment was viewed. Merchant states that the view of human power over environment or the view of the environment as a commodity to be used dates back to the time of the formation of modern science, the Enlightenment of the

17th century and the growth of the market-oriented culture in Europe. “In investigating the roots of our current environmental dilemma and its connections to science, technology and the economy, we must reexamine the formation of a world-view and a science that, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both nature and women” (Visvanathan, Duggan, Nisonoff and Wiegersma 1997, 70). This shift in worldview was written for men and from nature. Both women and nature, then, became objects to be used and controlled as a result of the view that both were passive and manipulable. “It emphasized and privileged rational thoughts and scientific process as the only basis of human (or male?) progress – values which were then argued to be found in men but not in women” (Turpin and Lorentzen 1996, 26).

Merchant documents that this mechanistic way of thinking was advanced by the Baconian doctrine and suggests that Francis Bacon’s, the celebrated father of science, metaphors “are explicitly those of domination – nature is to be bound to service and made a slave” (Merchant 1983 cited in Turpin and Lorentzen 1996, 26). For Bacon, nature was no longer Mother Nature, but a female nature, available to be conquered by an aggressive masculine mind. Following the mechanistic line of thought, women’s connection with nature led to their domination by men. Although Merchant does not address the issue of population, environment and women directly, her examination of the connection between women and nature describes the milieu from which discourse about women and population has arisen.

(B) Rosemary Radford Ruether

In *New Woman/New Earth*, Rosemary Radford Ruether's argument assumes a close relationship between women and nature. Ruether focuses on how women's oppression and the human destruction of nature are "legitimized and perpetuated by a hierarchical social structure that allows one group to dominate another" (Li 1993, 273). This societal structure is based on a dualistic ideology, which emphasizes separation and polarization between sexes, classes, and human and nonhuman beings. The subjugation of the inferior groups, women, lower class, people of colour and nature, is legitimized by the social structure of society. In the connection with the environment, Ruether concludes "the structures of patriarchal consciousness that destroy the harmony of nature are expressed symbolically and socially in the repression of women" (Radford Ruether 1975, 274).

Along similar lines to those of Carolyn Merchant, Ruether believes that the development and expansion of western science and technology seeks to exploit nature in order to expand production. "Infinite demand incarnate in finite nature, in the form of infinite exploitation of the earth's resources for production, results in ecological disaster" (194). Again this Northern ecofeminist does not address the issue of population as it interconnects with the environment and women but yet concentrates on the oppression of women and nature as a result of patriarchal structures and the lack of women's empowerment.

2.3.2. Southern Ecofeminists

While Northern ecofeminists such as Carolyn Merchant, Rosemary Radford Ruether and others uncovered patriarchal and colonialist basis of the oppression of the environment and population, particularly women, the ecofeminists of the South pushed the boundaries and have gone beyond the conceptions of the North.

(A) Vandana Shiva

Ecofeminists of the South such as Vandana Shiva have incorporated the cultural and environmental diversities that woman of the developing world face, and which Shiva claims the majority of ecofeminists of the North fail to address. Shiva, an Indian ecofeminist, views the violence of both women and nature as a result of how we in the North and the South perceive both women and nature. Like Merchant, however, Shiva argues “the violence to nature, which seems intrinsic to the dominant development model, is also associated with violence to women who depend on nature for drawing sustenance for themselves, their families, their societies” (Shiva 1988, xvi). Shiva also agrees with Merchant with regard to the patriarchal nature of Western science. She argues that this dominant form of development is the post-colonial project of the Northern powers which as a result attempts to impose this world view and its associated practices on women and the poor.

Vandana Shiva's work also directly examines the issue of population and its relationship with environmental degradation. In Maria Mies and Vandana

Shiva's book entitled *Ecofeminism*, both authors are very critical of the generally accepted narrow view of population growth as the root cause of environmental degradation. They point to the industrialization, technological progress and the affluent lifestyles of the developed nations as the agents precipitating and accelerating worldwide environmental degradation. "Population growth is not the cause of the environmental crises but one aspect of it, and both are related to resource alienation and destruction of livelihoods, first by colonialism and then continued by Northern-imposed models of maldevelopment"³ (Mies and Shiva 1993, 284). Shiva's 'feminine principle' meaning harmony, diversity and sustainability as practiced by local Indian women is the counter force of this maldevelopment.

In many patriarchal societies, women are responsible for the production and maintenance of everyday life, for water, fuel, food and fodder and as well land preservation. Unfortunately, with an increase in industrialized development initiated by the North, the women of the developing nations are pushed closer to the margins of their life-sustaining environment. "They are accused of destroying the forests in search of fuel, polluting and exhausting water sources in search of drinking water, and exhausting land resources by producing too many additional mouths to feed" (Mies and Shiva 1993, 279).

³ The definition provided by Shiva (1988) reads, "maldevelopment is usually called 'economic growth', measured by Gross National Product" (6). She continues "the problem with GNP is that it measures costs as benefits (eg. Pollution control) and fails to measure other costs completely. Among these hidden costs are the new burdens created by ecological devastation, costs that are invariably heavier for women, both in the North and South"(Shiva 1988, 7).

Shiva and Mies believe that most poor women of developing nations are objects of two forces that attempt to control their sexuality and reproductive activity; first, patriarchal institutions, ideologies, norms and attitudes that deny women sovereignty over their own bodies, and second, the international population control establishments, for whom women are seen only as potential breeders whose reproductive capabilities must be controlled. In neither North nor South do any of these population control agencies stand and openly criticize patriarchal institutions and attitudes. For instance, in the United Nations Fund for Population Action (UNFPA) latest report, *The State of World Population 1990*; all methods proposed to curb overpopulation are directed towards women (Mies and Shiva 1993, 279).

Merchant and Shiva specifically have been criticized for assuming that women's relationship to the environment is both natural and given and ignoring any differences between women with regard to their relationship with nature. This creates the impression that these authors view all women as equally committed to environmental conservation and that this commitment is somehow inherent.

(B) Bina Agarwal

Bina Agarwal, another Indian ecofeminist further examines these links. She questions this assumed connection women have with the environment and puts forth the question of whether this link is different from that which men have with the environment. She advocates that the connection that both men and women have with nature is specific to the form of interaction each has with the

environment and the specific knowledge of nature is shaped by the experience an individual has with it. Agarwal states that "insofar as there is gender and class/caste/race-based division of labour and distribution of property and power, gender and class (caste/race) structure people's interactions with nature and so the effects of environmental change on people and their responses to it" (Agarwal 1992, 5).

Agarwal introduced the perspective of 'feminist environmentalism' to highlight the material basis for this link between women and nature. This author differs from ecofeminist such as Shiva in that Agarwal calls into question the issue of gender relations which when dissecting the interconnections between environment, women and population cannot be ignored. Women's relationships with the environment are seen to be structured by a given class or gender organization of production, reproduction and distribution not as a given inherent relationship as voiced by Shiva. Agarwal advances the analysis of the gender basis for this relationship to examine the ideology surrounding and supporting these divisions. She believes that there is a need from the feminist and environmental fronts to challenge the methods of appropriation of nature's resources and the notions regarding the relationships with the environment. Agarwal states "feminist environmentalism underlines the necessity of addressing these dimensions from both fronts" (4). With regard to population, Agarwal advocates that there is a critical need to focus on women's status within the gendered organization of societies. Women, she clarifies, is not a unitary category, as access and effects of environmental degradation are class

gendered and therefore her emphasis is on women of poor, rural households who are most adversely affected by this degradation.

2.3.3. Role of the North: Ecofeminist View

Many ecofeminists, particularly Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, have written on the role the North plays in the environmental degradation of the South. Their argument is based on the premise that most ecosystems in the south carry local populations plus the North's demands for industrial raw materials and consumption. The 'carrying capacity' in the case of human societies is not simply a matter of local population size and the biological support systems. It represents a complex relationship between the populations of the North and ecosystems in the South. As Shiva and Mies explain, "the South's ecosystems (E) carry a double burden: supplying commodities and raw materials to the global market (G); and supporting the survival of local communities (L). Reducing L, and ignoring G, cannot protect E" (Mies and Shiva 1993, 283). Furthermore, what would be a sustainable population size on the basis of traditional local production, consumption and life style patterns becomes non-sustainable due to external resource exploitation. Therefore, the threshold for support within the South for their own communities continue to be problematic if the consumption patterns in the North remain the same.

As discussed prior in this thesis the North plays a role in determining the types of agriculture and production that southern countries establish through the implementation of such development policies as structural adjustment and the

conditions that are inclusive. Coupled with these economic orientated policies are the wants and consumer needs of those of the North. Large sections of land cleared for the planting of such crops as tobacco or other luxury export crops is very common within the rural South. Ultimately this call from the North for these items results in local food shortages, displacement of people and devastating environmental damage. But increasing populations are still being blamed as the main perpetrators of this environmental degradation. Mira Shiva writes in Vandana Shiva's *Close to Home* that at the same time as increasing populations are being held responsible for environmental damage "the forests in Sarawak are being cleared for making disposable chopsticks for Japan; and Indonesian forests, for making toilet paper and face tissues. The indigenous people in both are made destitute and homeless in their own land" (Shiva 1994, 76).

The consumption patterns of the North are seldom taken into account when examining the environmental decay of the South. Although population growth rates average only 0.5 per cent per year in the South compared with 2.1 per cent per year average in the North, those in the North, especially the richest of the rich, have a tremendous capacity to consume resources and generate wastes which gives the top billion richest people a disproportionate impact on the environment. (UNFPA 1991) Therefore the question of 'how many people?' cannot be separated from the patterns of consumption, which are inequitable in favour of the people in the North.

2.3.4. Birth Control: Ecofeminist Views

As mentioned prior, from an ecofeminist perspective, reproduction is not looked in isolation, but should be seen “in the light of men-women relations, the sexual division of labour, sexual relations, and overall economic, political and social situation, all of which, at present, are influenced by patriarchal and capitalist ideology and practice” (Mies and Shiva 1993, 294). Therefore, a primary demand of ecofeminists is that women must regain greater autonomy with regard to their sexuality, body and reproductive capacity coupled with the exclusion of coercive national or international intervention.

Feminists and ecofeminists of both the North and the South have been critical of the issue of imposed birth control. It is important to note that historically the women of the South have been inflicted with northern styles of birth control, which are entrenched in northern ideals and beliefs. Cultural norms, traditional attitudes, and the choices made out of desperation must be weighed, such as the more children a woman of poverty has, the more help she will receive in the fields and with general family survival. Also, it is important to consider the traditional belief, in some cultures, that children are insurance for support when parents reach old age.

Selective breeding or eugenics has been controversial from its inception in the late 19th century but with the advancement of technology the issue of selective breeding is very prevalent. In countries such as India and China amniocentesis is used as a sex-determination test and ultimately leads to large-scale abortions of female fetuses. Cultural enforced sex selection coupled with

forced sterilization results in a woman's lack of autonomy over her body. There are cultural and financial reasons behind women aborting female fetuses and for agreeing on sterilization for payment, which cannot be ignored or used in judgment of these women.

Third world women have historically and even today been treated as guinea pigs in terms of contraceptive technologies. The strategy of the fight against poor Southern women's fertility ignores the long-term side effects of many contraceptive technologies on women's health. Mies and Shiva state that "poor Third World women are treated not as persons but as numerical entities in demographic statistics" (Mies and Shiva 1993, 191). Contraceptives that are not yet licensed for use in the West are being tested predominately on women of the developing nations. For example the injectable contraceptives such as Depoprovera have been tested and propagated in the South although they are banned in the USA because of carcinogenic potential.

The issue of informed consent is important as many women in these countries are coerced into receiving these injectables without full or any knowledge of their side effects or even told that they are contraceptives at all. Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies in their book *Ecofeminism*, argue that long-lasting hormonal injectable contraceptives have been especially designed for illiterate Third World women, "who, according to the understanding of the population planners, are incapable of exercising any rational control over their reproductive functions" (193). Contraceptives such as Depoprovera, NET-OEN and Norplant (which is implanted in the woman's arm under the skin and diffuses

a steroid over a period of five years) are all aimed at the assumed to be helpless, illiterate and ignorant women of the developing nations as such methods as the pill and IUD are viewed as too complex for these women. "In the process of developing ever-more effective technical fixes to depopulate the south, women's dignity and integrity, their health and that of their children are of little concern" (Mies and Shiva 1993, 289). The issues of empowerment and education of these women surrounding the coercion and infliction of contraceptive devices will be examined in Chapter Three.

2.3.5. Shortcomings of Ecofeminism

Ecofeminists have been criticized for romanticizing the relationship between women and nature based on a feminine ideal. It is not made clear through ecofeminism of all women, whose character forms the basis for the ideal. Also, the question has been posed, would the feminine ideal come as a package inclusive of both positive and negative traits associated with women? It follows if that specific female traits cannot be identified then the extent that women are connected to nature is only conceptual in nature (Archambault 1993). Furthermore, ecofeminism has been critiqued for being extremely theoretical and academic in nature thereby excluding the majority of women from the discourse.

This school has also been criticized for over generalizing women's inherent care regarding the environment. By encompassing all women as caretakers of the environment, ecofeminism has denied the diversity of the world's women. Ultimately, "assuming that women are the special custodians of

nature because of their closeness to it can only reinforce the irresponsibility of men toward nature, leaving it as women's work" (Murphy 1994, 90). Labeling women as closer to nature and therefore the ultimate custodian may be limiting the role they play within society and may be adhering to a form of essentialism in that there is some notion of a female essence which is unchangeable (Bina Agarwal in Arizpe, Stone and Major 1994). In addition, this claim that women are biologically closer to nature only perpetuates the notion that biology determines the social inequalities between women and men, a point which has been contested by feminists for the past twenty years. Also, ecofeminism posits 'woman' as a unitary category ignoring the vast differences between women, particularly those of the South.

Ecofeminism has brought to the forefront of feminist research and theory a promise to provide not only an orientation and New World view but also a basis for responsible action. Unfortunately, no strand of ecofeminist theory or research has put forth instruction for what people should do in situations of domination of nature and that of women. There tends to be a backwardness of action in that ecofeminists often cite various instances and forms of feminist and environmental activism and claim them as ecofeminist. For example, the Chipko movement in India, the global fight for women's reproductive freedom, and the antinuclear movements were not consciously constructed to be ecofeminist in nature but the ecofeminists have laid claim to them insofar as these movements and actions explicitly or implicitly acknowledge and challenge the domination and maltreatment of the environment and its members (Warren 1996). This

backwardness of claiming actions to be ecofeminist in nature exemplifies that this feminist theoretical position is still evolving.

2.4. Summary of Chapter

To summarize, this chapter has examined the various participants within the development discourse as it pertains to the population, women and environment problem. How these factors have been addressed historically and today has shifted simultaneously with that of development priorities. The manner in which women have been addressed has shifted from that of aid to homemakers to that of empowerment parallel to that, within the population issue, there has been a shift from that of development as contraceptive to the call for women's control over decision affecting population and environment. The examination of ecofeminists views provides a critical analysis of development and ultimately puts forth transformative visions of development. The examination of the various views surrounding this issue provides a background for more in depth analysis of the issue of women within development in Chapter Three and an examination of the Zimbabwean context of development, environment and women's issues in Chapter four.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction: WID, WAD, GAD, and WED

Several schools of thought regarding women and development have been evident since the early 1970s. WID (Women In Development), WAD (Women And Development, GAD (Gender And Development), and WED (Women Environment and Development) are the most common acronyms found in the development literature and practice. All have different philosophical bases for addressing women and development issues. Although WID, WAD and GAD do not address the issue of population and the environment exclusively, it is important to understand their underpinnings as the ideology of women and development of a given period directly affects and influences the policy and practice regarding population and the environment within the development field. These schools of thought steered how women were to be addressed at such conferences and gatherings discussed in Chapter Two. They also provide a springboard for evaluating the current discourse on women, population and the environment. In this thesis it functions to refine the discussion around the notion and strategies of agency and empowerment for women.

3.1.1 Women In Development (WID)

Ester Boserup's work, "Women's Role in Economic Development," (1970) in the early 1970s, served as a catalyst to bring women to the forefront of the development discourse. She examined women's role in economic development and found that a majority of the projects, of that time, ignored women and furthermore, in such projects as technical schemes, women's economic opportunities were actually undermined. Training in new technology was offered only to men, which widened the technical gap between them and women. The preconceived sex roles were strengthened and the benefits from such projects ceased to trickle down to the women. The findings of Boserup's work served as a springboard for the Women In Development (WID) approach.

The theoretical base for the WID approach came out of the modernization school of thought. To a large extent it did not question the premises of the existing forms of development; rather, it focused on bringing women into it. (Rathgeber 1990) The WID concept arises from theorizing about the absence of women from development plans, policies and statistics as the basic problem and is based on the assumption that there is a technological 'fix' to the plight of women. WID is rooted in a liberal perspective focusing on the agency of the individual as primary in effecting change. Hence women's status would be improved through efforts of individual women.

The concept of WID was first used by the women's committee of the Washington D.C. Society for International Development (SID), which at the time was attempting to have women explicitly included in development. These efforts

of American liberal feminists focused on finding a remedy for the inequalities that women in developing countries experienced by having them integrated into economic activities in order to minimize discrimination and disadvantage in the productive sector, and increase their economic independence. (Jaquette 1982; Rathgeber 1990)

The goals of WID were to integrate women into the development process by focusing on the advocacy for equal participation in education and employment in order to increase women's productivity and income. The agents for this change were the policy makers and development 'experts' in government, bilateral and multilateral agencies. This perspective came to be referred to as 'add women and stir'. It did not question the structures and ideologies behind women's subordination and as a result accepts and ultimately strengthens existing dominating social structures. The WID approach homogenized women by giving no recognition to differences between women according to race, class or culture and also ignored women's reproductive and domestic roles within society. The supporters of this approach viewed the state as the solution, rather than a problem, for the advancement of women. WID did not challenge the dominant development model in that it did not call for structural change; nor did it address women's subordination as a result of patriarchal structures, but advocated that "gender relations would change of themselves as women became full economic partners in development" (Rathgeber 1990, 492). This approach did not recognize more critical perspectives on women or development, such as dependency theory, Marxists or socialist feminism.

3.1.2 Women And Development (WAD)

Out of the limitations of modernization theory as a whole and the WID perspective, the Women And Development (WAD) approach emerged in the second half of the 1970s. WAD was situated within the neo-Marxist approach while drawing some of its theoretical base from dependency theory. Dependency feminists viewed the inequalities of men and women as part of the larger picture of the global economy and ultimately sexual inequalities as another aspect of the inequalities created by capitalist accumulation. From a Neo-Marxist position the WAD perspective examined the socio-economic, class and structural factors within which gender inequalities were embedded. WAD's basic premise was that women have always been an integral part of the development process and that they did not just appear in the early 1970s as the result of insights of a few scholars and agency personnel. It has been noted by Achola Okello Pala in the mid-1970s that "integrating women into development was inextricably linked to the maintenance of the economic dependency of Third World and especially African countries on the industrialized countries" (Rathgeber 1990, 493). This integration was based on the assumption that at the time when international structures became more equitable, women's position would improve.

WAD offered a more critical view of women's position than did WID, but it failed "to undertake a full-scale analysis of the relationship between patriarchy, differing modes of production, and women's subordination and oppression" (Rathgeber 1990, 493). Also absent in the WAD analysis was the examination of the differentiation of women particularly along racial and ethnic lines. Under the

premise of the dependency theory, the WAD perspective discourages a strict analytical focus on the problems of women independent of those of men since both are seen to be disadvantaged as a result of the oppressive global structure based on class and capital. Like WID, WAD also possessed a singular preoccupation with women's productive as separate from reproductive roles. With the focus primarily on the economic realm, activities such as childbearing and rearing, household maintenance, and other tasks performed by the women within the household were assigned no economic value, therefore outside the domain of development. (Rathgeber 1990) This perspective, ignoring any analysis of gender relations, assumed that once international structures became more equitable, women's positions would improve.

3.1.3. Gender And Development (GAD)

In the early 1980s the Gender And Development (GAD) perspective emerged out of the shortcomings and critiques of WID and WAD. The term gender is used to refer to the differences between women and men that are socially and culturally constructed. Gender shapes the lives of all people in all societies. It influences "all aspects of our lives, the schooling we receive, the social roles we play, and the power and authority we command" (Riley 1997, 2). The roles men and women play within a given society are defined by gender.

Although GAD, rooted in socialist feminism, emphasizes women's empowerment and male responsibility it includes a definite role which the state must play. The state is expected to assume a critical role in providing

programmes to support the work of social reproduction, namely the care and nurturance of children and in promoting women's emancipation. Supporters of this perspective give weight to political activism and transforming community activism in order to attain societal transformation.

This perspective takes a two pronged approach to the analysis of women and development. The first is the investigation of women's class position within a given society and secondly, the examination of the social constructs that kept women in subordinate positions. GAD centres on the relations between women and men rather than on women singularly and how these relations determine women's position in society. This approach views women as agents of development not only recipients. The empowerment of women in the roles of development planning and implementation, as well as the politicizing of practical needs and their transformation into strategic interests is important to the GAD perspective.

Women's practical needs relate to daily needs of a woman, which can be addressed by the provision of specific material inputs such as hand pumps, clinics and so on. Addressing practical needs may improve the short-term condition of women's lives but generally does not alter traditional roles and relationships. On the other hand, strategic needs tend to be long term and address disadvantaged positions such as subordination, lack of resources and vulnerability to poverty by means of consciousness raising, increasing self confidence, education and strengthening of women's organizations. This enables women to become agents in improving their position in society. GAD emphasizes

the need to combine practical needs with strategic needs in such a way as satisfaction of practical needs, a pre-requisite to the empowerment of women, also addresses women's particular strategic interests. The aim is to supply empowering tools for a transformation of gender relations. In other words the aim is to 'change the structure of the world'.

Key elements of the GAD perspective include a holistic approach that examines "the totality of social organization, economics and political life in order to understand the shaping of particular aspects of society" (Young cited in Rathgeber 1990, 494). This approach goes farther than WID or WAD in examining and questioning the underlying assumptions that shape the economic, social and political structures. GAD does not advocate for women's participation by affirmative action strategies but the shift of power within the controlling structures. As a result of this questioning of power and structures, a fully articulated GAD perspective is rarely found in development projects and policies.

3.1.4. Women, Environment and Sustainable Development (WED)

During the early 1970s there was a growing interest within the development discourse in women's relations with the environment in developing countries. With natural disasters such as the droughts of the 1970s and deforestation in the South coupled with Ester Boserup's work in women's role in agriculture, the issue of women and the environment gained momentum. The NGO conference held parallel to the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, reported the initiatives that local people, particularly

women, were successfully taking in order to protect their environment. In 1985 at the Nairobi Forum which was held parallel to the UN Women and Development Conference women were portrayed as “environmental managers whose involvement was crucial to the achievement of sustainable development” (Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler and Wieringa 1997, 54). The studies, which indicated the success of such initiatives as the Chipko movement to save the trees in India, served to further the WED debate.

Another was the Green Belt movement started in 1974 by Dr. Mathai in Kenya. This movement was instigated by Dr. Mathai's after witnessing the easy to prepare but not very nourishing foods cooked by poor women because of the lack of and high prices of charcoal and wood. She saw clearly that there could be no long-term agricultural future for Kenya and ultimately no livelihood for the rural people, unless the water, trees, and other natural resources were cared for. Dr. Mathai stated:

We needed to do something within our reach. We didn't have a lot of money, but we had a lot of hands, so we decided to start with what we could do and that was to plant trees (Mathai 1986 cited in Jiggins 1994, 98)

The Greenbelt Movement attempted to reverse humanly produced deforestation by planting trees for conservation of soil and water.

Women were encouraged to use existing skills in handicrafts and goat rearing to raise money to set up tree nurseries. These nurseries supplied the seedlings that were planted by the women or sold to local farmers, schools, and

local officials, generating income. This movement promoted traditional agroforestry methods that had been replaced by 'modern' farming techniques that relied on fertilizers, irrigation systems and pesticides.

This movement has expanded to other parts of Africa, including Zimbabwe. Households are planting trees on their own initiative and schools are starting up tree nurseries. From 1977 to 1987 the movement planted "over seven million trees, created hundreds of jobs, reintroduced indigenous tree species, educated people in the need for environmental care, and promoted the independence and a more positive image of women" (Merchant 1992, 203). Ultimately women were becoming active participants within environmental management.

During the late 1980s, particularly following the Bruntland Report, *Our Common Future*, the WED debate shifted the image of poor southern women as victims to women with strength and resourcefulness, as privileged managers, with skills and knowledge in environmental care. WED is based on the premise that women have a particular relationship with the environment and that women and their knowledge must be included in development strategies and programs. Situated within WED literature are the various perspectives of ecofeminists as reviewed in Chapter One that call for a transformation of development goals in order to consider and address women's knowledge and role within the environment.

3.1.5. Conclusion

This section has addressed the shift in perspectives of women within the development discourse over the last thirty years. This shift in how women are to be addressed within development has moved from 'add women and stir' to that of recognizing and harnessing women's unique knowledge and experiences in order to benefit their own lives, the development process and the environment. It is important to note the shift in ideology over the years, as it is this ideology that ultimately shapes policies, strategies and critiques regarding population and environment. Population was conceived as and still remains largely a 'women's issue'.

3.2 Gender Roles - Introduction

As mentioned earlier, the term gender is used in this thesis to refer to the differences between women and men that are constructed by society and cultures. Therefore gender roles describe the roles assigned to women and men by their position, culture and society. "Gender is not just a characteristic of relations between individuals Gender is created through a society's assignment of some activities to women and other to men" (United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development 1995, p299). It must be understood that gender and as a result gender roles, are interwoven with class, ethnicity and other hierarchical social relations which organize a society's institutions and practices.

3.2.1. Women's Triple Role

The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences specifies that a role provides “a comprehensive pattern for behavior and attitudes; it constitutes a strategy for coping with recurrent situation; it is socially identified, more or less clearly, as an entity; it is subject to being played recognizably by different individuals and it supplies a major basis for identifying and placing persons in society” (Turner 1968,13 in Anker, Buvinic, and Youssef 1982, 155). In all countries but especially in developing countries, women have widely varied roles; they bear and raise children, they produce goods and services, play a key role in the extended family and provide family with the necessities of life, food, fuel, and water. It has been documented that “ women perform 67% of the world's working hours; women earn 10% of the world's income; women are 2/3 of the world's illiterate; and women own less than 1% of the world's property” (CCIC: MATCH International 1991, p.12). Gender roles and relations vary from culture to culture and are dynamic and change over time. For women, time is a valuable commodity as women's work encompasses three categories; reproductive, productive, and community work. This is referred to as women's Triple Role.

Reproductive work encompasses a vast array of time-consuming, labour intensive activities from bearing and caring for children, maintenance of the household, food preparation, water and fuel collection, and family health care. Reproductive work is almost always the responsibility of girls and women and although this work is vital for human survival it is seldom considered 'real' work. Furthermore, women's health, particularly their reproductive health, is

fundamental to the success of population, environment and development initiatives, yet is more often than not neglected. (UNFPA 1992) In order for women to effectively carry out their roles within the productive sphere, the family and the community, maternal and child health care and family planning must be readily available. Coupled with the availability of health care is the recognition of women's rights as individuals to make free and informed choices about their reproductive behavior. The issue of reproductive rights will be discussed later in this chapter.

Productive work, in reference to women, involves the production of goods and services for consumption and trade including farming, fishing, employment and self-employment. Women's efforts in productive work are often less visible and less valued than men's although women "produce more than 80 per cent of the food in sub-Saharan Africa, 50-60 per cent of Asia's, 46 per cent of the Caribbean's, and more than 30 per cent of Latin America's" (UNFPA 1992, 10). But as productive work refers to 'income generating activities', much of women's productive work is not valued as it is produced for consumption by family members.

Community work refers to the large amount of volunteer time in which both women and men are involved. Although both men and women participate in community work, women, through the gender division of labour are assigned the most time consuming and supportive type jobs. This type of work includes the organization of social events, cultural ceremonies and celebrations, community improvement activities, local political activities, and so on (Oxfam 1994). It is

important to note that these gendered roles and divisions of labour confine women to their ascribed subordinate positions.

In most societies women do almost all of the reproductive and much of the productive work which is seen as 'natural' or effortless and therefore ignored by men and significantly the development planners who assess different needs within the community. Carolyn Moser states "because the triple role of women is not recognized, the fact that women, unlike men, are severely constrained by the burden of simultaneously balancing these role of reproductive, productive and community managing work is ignored" (Moser cited in Kabeer 1994, 275). This workload prevents women from participating in development projects that may lead to an increase in education or ultimately their own empowerment.

3.2.2. Women as Environmental Managers

In performing the above-mentioned multiplicity of roles, women constantly interact and influence their environment. In Dankelman and Davidson's book entitled, *Women and Environment in the Third World*, the authors state that "women, particularly those living in the rural areas of Third World countries, play a major role in managing natural resources – soil, water, forests and energy. Their tasks in agriculture and animal husbandry as well as in the household make them the daily managers of the living environment" (Dankelman and Davidson 1988, xi). Women's ability to manage the environment from what they depend on is critical for everyday survival.

As concern for the environment has increased, simultaneously has the literature on women's role as environmental managers. In general, women in developing countries manage natural resources on three broad levels; as providers of food, fuel, fodder and water; as caretakers of their families health and well being by maintaining sanitary conditions around the household; and as conservationists by safeguarding forests, soils, and water to ensure tomorrow's needs can be met. (UNFPA 1992) Exactly how women carry out these activities, varies across cultures but generally women "retain knowledge of the local varieties of plants which they customarily have provisioned, they maintain forms of mixed horticultural production which conserve soil nutrients and help prevent erosion, and they retain techniques for managing forest area and 'wild' resources" (Collins in Gallin and Ferguson 1991, 39). This point will be further exemplified within the Zimbabwean context in Chapter Four.

Women in developing countries, especially rural women, are not unaware of the concept of environmental degradation but their choices are limited and their responses to it are actions that are necessary for the survival of their family within the constraints with which they exist. It is understandable that women of developing countries want to play a part in sustaining the natural environment but that they cannot participate in such schemes, as these schemes may jeopardize their immediate livelihood.

Through the past development initiatives more men have been drawn into profit seeking activities which has increased male urban migration and as a result women have been pushed further into production of sustenance. Women are

required to use their surrounding environment in such a manner that the livelihood of their families can be supported. Through their everyday interaction with their environment, women's indigenous knowledge offers deeper and richer ecological insights about their habitat and their surrounding environment and the forms of healing that are appropriate.

3.2.3. Conclusion

There are many factors that affect women's management of the environment including their decision making power, access to appropriate training and technology and the access to resources. Although there is a new sense of urgency as a result of the greater concerns of management of natural resources, the framing is sometimes misguided, ignoring the influences that affect women's roles in society and focusing exclusively on population growth as the reason for environmental degradation. It must be kept in mind that ecological degradation affects women disproportionately in that it is they, primarily, that have to use their natural surroundings for their family's survival.

3.3. **Women's Access to Resources**

Few women actually own the land they work on and therefore do not always reap the benefits from environmental improvements. On the other hand, the deterioration of that land directly affects women in that as the land deteriorates, so do the resources available to them and the harder they have to work for decreasing returns. Women own no more than one per cent of the

worlds land and even where they have access to it for farming, their tenure is usually costly and uncertain (Reardon 1993). Without ownership of land or secure access to it, women are denied access to credit, training and the ability to guarantee the supply of food and support for their family's survival. The issue of land rights and land reform are empowerment and environmental issues for women but development policy makers and politicians rarely identify them as such.

Not only are land ownership and rights to resources directly tied to the issue of women's power within a community but they are also directly tied to the ways in which the land is used. Women have traditionally been given informal rights to the land. Therefore, women may find that they are expected to continue to provide resources to which they may no longer have access. For example, with growing mechanization and urbanization, male entrepreneurs now collect large quantities of wood for various uses but because women's rights to that wood supply were always informal, they have no recourse or protection when others encroach upon the forest areas they use to support their families (Gallin and Ferguson 1991).

3.4. Women's Empowerment and Participation

Agarwal (1995) defines empowerment as: "a process which enhances the ability of disadvantaged ("powerless") individuals or groups to challenge and change (in their favour) existing power relationships that place them in

subordinate economic, social and political positions” (Meinzen-Dick, Brown, Feldstein, and Quisumbing 1997, 1306). Property rights as mentioned above are part of this empowerment process in that ownership itself contributes to empowerment but also the organization and support of women’s groups to attain rights are empowering. Also the empowerment process is tied to the issue of the education of women.

The status and education of women directly affects their decision making power within the home, including the decision of family size. Education in issues of health, literacy, technology, and finances would give women more control over their own lives. As Rick Searle states “education is the key component in the social progress of women. When women are educated, they are more likely to have higher status in the family and in society, and be more empowered to make their own decisions” (Searle 1995, 11). It has been written that woman’s lack of education often compels women to marry early and have large families, especially in those developing countries that family income is supplemented by child labour. Ultimately, where women have more decision-making authority, higher education, and their viewpoints are taken into consideration by village and development committees, fertility has been lowered, resources have been better managed and environmental degradation has been reduced (UNFPA 1991). Wendy Harcourt concludes that “it is now a widely held view that the empowerment of women is of crucial importance for managing sustainably the local environment as well as for lowering fertility rates” (Harcourt 1994, 232).

Therefore the advancement of women's education and decision making power are factors in fertility and the role that women play regarding the environment.

3.5. Women's Reproductive Rights

Integral to the empowerment of women is the ability and freedom to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights. The issue of reproductive rights is important within the women, population and environment equation in that women will continue to be treated as targets of demographic goals if their reproductive and human rights are ignored. The international understanding of sexual and reproductive rights has broadened considerably over the past three decades.

UNFPA state that the key components include the rights to;

reproductive and sexual health as a component of overall health, throughout the life cycle; reproductive decision-making, including voluntary choice in marriage, family formation and determination of the number, timing and spacing of one's children; and the right to have access to the information and means needed to exercise voluntary choices; equality and equity for men and women to enable individuals to make free and informed choices in all spheres of life, free from discrimination based on gender; and sexual and reproductive security, including freedom from sexual violence and coercion, and the right to privacy (UNFPA 1997, 2).

The United Nations Population Fund's document, *State of the World's Population 1997* reports; that the effects of denying these sexual and reproductive rights include; "585,000 women-one every minute-die each year from pregnancy related causes, nearly all of them in developing countries, about 200,000

maternal deaths per year result from the lack or failure of contraceptive services, 120-150 million women who want to limit or space their pregnancies are still without the means to do so effectively, and at least 75 million pregnancies each year (out of about 175 million) are unwanted”(UNFPA 1997, 2).

It is important to situate the issue of women's reproductive rights within the development discourse. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 affirmed equality among sexes as a basic principle, but it was only in 1975 that the international bodies seriously examined women's condition. This was done when the United Nations sponsored meetings launching the Women's decade, resulting in the 1975 International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City which initiated the decade-long process that apexed in Nairobi in 1985 (Correa 1994). It was not until the Mexico City conference that feminists denounced coercive practices surrounding contraceptive research and practices as human rights abuses. Ultimately, “women activists were instrumental in ensuring that the 1975 Women's conference grounded its assertion of the right to reproductive choice on a notion of bodily integrity and control” (57). Following this, the participants of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo agreed in principle “that advancing gender equality and equity and the empowerment of women, and the elimination of all kinds of violence against women, and ensuring women's ability to control their own fertility, are cornerstones of population and development-related programmes” (Riley 1997, 2). It is important to note that how these declarations are put into

action through policies and programmes and their success remains to be seen in the decades to come.

The issue of women's social empowerment and economic security are directly correlated with good reproductive health. Unfortunately, women's access to reproductive health services is constrained by their lack of resources, restrictions on social participation, and limited access to information due to lack of education and illiteracy. From this it is clear that the reproductive health and rights encompasses a vast arena of issues.

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) is a network of southern women activists and researchers that examine the issue of reproductive rights from a holistic perspective. DAWN's framework for women's reproductive rights and health goes beyond that of a woman's biological reproductive function by including attention to women's economically productive and cultural roles. DAWN's definition of reproductive health services include not only access to contraceptive information and methods and legal and safe abortions, but also mental health services and prenatal care with the inclusion and respect for traditional health knowledge which are gradually being destroyed by imposed medical technologies (Correa 1994, 58).

Entrenched within reproductive rights is that of the right to family planning information and methods. Family planning is the conscious effort to determine the number and spacing of births. This freedom of decision and access to information and methods was first recognized as a human right in 1968 (UNFPA 1992). It has been endorsed at past international conferences such as World

Population Conference held in Bucharest in 1974 and by the International Conference on Population in Mexico City in 1984. The gathering in Mexico City reaffirmed “the right to choice of family size without coercion, and the right to chose the method, which should include all medically-approved and appropriate methods of family planning” (UNFPA 1992, 8).

It is important to understand that family planning does not exist in isolation of culture, religion and society, and that the success of family planning programs is determined by how well integrated it is into the needs and wants of a given community and does not imply population control but freedom of choice. Therefore, family planning must address issues of health and empowerment, be respectful of women’s rights, and not be used as a political agenda in order merely to meet demographic targets. The issue of population will become more pertinent as environmental concerns remain at the forefront of development and universal concerns and as the population and environment debate continues but it has been noted that population and family planning programs do not provide a quick fix for environmental problems. This aside, if designed and implemented according to their users needs and wants, these programs play a role in the environment and population relationship.

3.5.1. Conclusion

The concept of reproductive rights and the right to family planning must be regarded as equal to human rights in order to enable women to choose the size and spacing of their families. Family planning and reproductive rights are

intrinsically tied to participation, education, structures within communities and the roles that women play within. Women's decisions regarding the number of children are affected by all of these factors and to address one while ignoring the others is to look at an issue out of the realistic context of it. Women of developing countries may be given these rights in the international arena but what is most important is that they are given the means and freedom to exercise these rights within their communities. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that fertility is determined by cultural and socio-economic factors such as women's economic autonomy, legal and political rights, education, health and access to reproductive health services, exemplifying the importance of looking beyond population control. Family planning implies choice whereas population control implies forced means of fertility control. In order for women to have choice, the factors discussed within the section must be addressed.

3.6. Summary of Chapter

To summarize, this chapter has examined four perspectives regarding women and development, their varying philosophies and assumptions about women in the development process and how they have shifted corresponding with the development paradigm of the time. The triple role of women as well as their role as environmental managers were examined in order to portray the indispensable part women have in the survival of their families as well as the environment. The analysis of the factors affecting women's participation and empowerment reasserts the importance of holistic approach to the issue of

women, population and the environment. This chapter has outlined the various factors surrounding women in development and has provided a background for examining the Zimbabwe context of the women, population and environment issue in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined women within the development discourse, the various theoretical perspectives, their participation and agency and women's various roles. This chapter will build on these strands and apply them in the context of Zimbabwe's historical and recent development. First I will undertake a general overview of the historical background of the country from colonization to present day. This will be followed by an examination of agency through laws and legislation, past and present, of Zimbabwean women. Integrated throughout the chapter will be direct accounts from Zimbabwean women pertaining to the issue at hand.

This chapter will then examine population issues including family planning and education. Next I will discuss the effects of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Zimbabwean women. Finally an examination of the environmental problems faced by Zimbabwe and the impacts they have directly and indirectly on women.

4.1.1. Background

To understand the Zimbabwe of today it is important to look at the situation prior to colonization of this region. In the 19th century groups or clans inclusive of the Shona, Ndebele, San and Tonga occupied Zimbabwe. The majority were agriculturists, who practiced shifting cultivation, moving every three to four years to fertile soil and new grazing areas. The important aspect of the Shona's connection to the land was that their approach was not one of control or exploitation, but rather one of unity and dependency. The land was cultivated in order to survive, it was not owned in the northern sense. Emphasizing the use of traditional knowledge of the natural environment it has been noted that "flowing from their feeling of dependency and their belief that the land would also feed the generations to come, these people were sensitive to their natural environment and took from it only what they needed" (Auret 1989, 5). This traditional approach to the environment diminished with the increase in settlers, which intensified with the British claiming the territory in 1895 and renaming it Rhodesia.

The roles which Zimbabwean women have played have shifted dramatically over time. Prior to the advent of colonialism there was no role competition between men and women. Instead each had their roles, which were complementary to each other. It is interesting to note that within this traditional society, women were held in high regard by virtue of the role they played, "namely that of 'provider', in terms of providing offspring for her own and her husband's group and in providing food for the family" (99). This role of provider situated women at the centre of responsibility for life and the fulfillment of these

roles was the source of a woman's status and influence. Prior to colonization, a woman, although not having access to land in her own right, held a position of authority in the agricultural sector as a result of being responsible for the planting, cultivation and distribution of the crops.

The ideology of Colonialism is based upon the premise of imposition. The settlers that came to Zimbabwe brought with them their middle class Victorian beliefs, where men dominated both the private and public spheres. Within this ideology, women were regarded as being the centre of the home and were not expected to work outside of it. Ultimately the imposed western values and norms of the settlers brought about change in all aspects of traditional culture, but particularly the economic sphere. In turn "this resulted in far-reaching changes in the position and roles of the rural women in her family and in her community" (Auret 1989, 101). No longer were women and men's roles complementary.

With the shift within the economic sphere from a traditional system to that of a monetised economy and the necessity to pay taxes to the settler governments, more men were pulled away from their homes in search of acquiring a livelihood. The women of rural Zimbabwe were forced to provide for their families while their husbands worked elsewhere but yet were given no control of resources or an increase in power. The men that did stay behind and worked the land were no longer working with the women to assist in family survival; they were now growing cash crops. According to Batezat and Mwalo:

migration of men to commercial farms, mines and industries had the immediate effect of increasing women's already considerable work

burden. In addition to caring for children and their traditional tasks of food processing and preparation, women have to take on the work normally done by men. The result is a staggering workload for women with a working day beginning at 4:30am and ending at 9pm (Betezat and Mwalo, 1989, 10).

The shift to and advancement of the market economy not only lacked benefits for women but also placed additional burdens upon them.

Through extension services, training and new technologies offered only to male farmers, men became the main agricultural producers. There was a shift from producing for the well being of the family or larger kin group to food crops becoming the source of individual gain. For the first time husband and wife farmed as two separate individuals using different modes in pursuit of different ends. Ultimately, "the decline of production by the women, resulted in enormous hardship for the woman, and ultimately led to a loss of prestige and standing within her marital extended family" (Auret 1989, 103). However, her workload continued to increase as she battled to feed and support her family but was restricted and hampered by her lack of knowledge of modern farming methods, a lack of ownership of farming implements, lack of access to credit for farming inputs, and low literacy and educational levels.

After a lengthy war of liberation, an independent Zimbabwe was born on April 18, 1980. At its inception, Zimbabwe became committed to the establishment of a democratic, egalitarian society in which every citizen would reap the benefits of development. The government of Zimbabwe adopted a policy

of socialist reconstruction and development based on Marxism-Leninism ideology (Gordon 1997). The policy of 'Growth with Equity' (1980) brought about advances in the health and education sectors. These two sectors in particular were seen as the major successes of the decade of socialist reconstruction (Gordon 1997, 265). This new independent country aimed to achieve equality before the law, and equality of access to the country's resources such as health, education and land and full participation in decisions regarding these resources for the women of Zimbabwe. In order to address these issues and others pertaining to women's participation within development, the government established the Ministry of Community, Co-operative Development and Women's Affairs "whose objectives would be to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in order to ensure the effective participation of women in all sectors of national development, and enhance the quality of life for not only women, but also for the communities at large" (Auret 1989, 107). The establishment of this ministry was heralded as Zimbabwe's commitment, at the time of independence, to readdress the inequalities based on sex within the country and the changing roles which women had undergone during the period of colonization.

4.2. Agency for Zimbabwean Women

4.2.1 Laws and Women

Zimbabwe's early socialist development policies toward women were considered by some to be one of the more progressive in the region. It is important to note that women, some 250,000, were actively involved in the

liberation struggle as provider of food and shelter for the fighters, as messengers, carriers of weapons and equipment and as active fighters (Gallin and Ferguson 1991). This involvement within the liberation movement forced an acknowledgment of some of the women's demands within national politics. As a result, following independence in 1980, the legislature removed "all customary, social, economic constraints that might prevent women from fully participating in development" (214). Yet, as will be demonstrated later in this section, the outcome of this abolishment of constraints has been somewhat contradictory.

Several laws were instituted during 1982-1985 to improve women's legal status, such as the Legal Age of Majority Act, the Customary Law and Primary Courts Act, and the Sex Disqualification Act. The Legal Age Act gave women and men full freedom from parental control once they had reached the legal age of eighteen. Under law, women of eighteen no longer required a guardian, were free to own property and free to enter into contracts including marriage. The Customary Law and Primary Courts Act, passed in 1982, was a major law reform. It included the Community Courts having power to enforce maintenance by men for their deserted or divorced wives if the marriage was contracted under Customary Law. This change in legislation gave women the means by which to demand security from absent husbands. The Sex Disqualification Act gave Zimbabwean women the right to hold public office and to participate in all public functions (Auret 1989, 117).

Customary Laws were the only governance regarding inheritance prior to independence. Following independence, The Inheritance Law was passed that

provided the structure for the carrying out of a legal will and the distribution of property based on this will. Unfortunately, the Inheritance Law is only applicable for surviving spouses if the marriage is registered. Spouses of a Customary non-registered marriage are not covered. The continuance of Customary Laws and local pressure of traditional beliefs coupled with the lack of information and knowledge of Inheritance Laws create confusion and contradiction regarding inheritance. It has been said "Customary Laws of Inheritance create the most tragic results for the women of Zimbabwe. Under Customary Law all property is left to the brothers of the husband. This includes: house, land, personal property, cash, and children. Even the widow herself is inherited by the brothers" (Zimbabwe Women's Bureau 1992, 13). Even with the new laws in place, Customary Laws prevail when the marriage has not been registered.

Zimbabwe was ahead of the 1992 Agenda 21 call on governments to remove constitutional and legal constraints imposed on women by introducing laws to promote women's advancement and removing laws that proved to be barriers. Unfortunately, the information and clear understanding of these laws have not been distributed and shared with all women of Zimbabwe, especially those in the rural areas. There are contradictions between the Civil Laws and the Customary Laws, which pose severe problems within the rural setting, as cultural mores are still influential. Means by which to act if these new laws are not obeyed are not always accessible for rural women; for many women, how to address such issues is unknown. Lack of knowledge and infrastructure coupled

with the strength of traditional attitudes have practically erased any benefits these new laws were to present for Zimbabwean women.

4.2.2. Women's Voices

In 1981 the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau conducted a social survey entitled "We Carry a Heavy Load." In 1991 a follow up survey was completed under the same name. In both of these surveys the bureau made no attempt to use statistical techniques but rather emphasis was on the voices of the people themselves.⁴ Fifty districts and six natural regions were covered within each survey for a total of 915 women and 572 men. By doing this survey one year following Independence and then ten years later, the follow up survey shows in several areas shifts in women's attitudes and in other areas, women's dissatisfaction regarding lack of improvements in their lives.

In the arena of legislation geared towards women's equality during the 1980s, women of the rural areas had been given an increase in opportunity to equally participate and contribute to society. However, "lack of information, misinterpretation, and cultural constraints have held effective utilization of these opportunities in check" (Zimbabwe's Women's Bureau 1992, 14). Many women interviewed by the Bureau in 1991 held the new laws in question, as they did not

⁴ It is important to note that this follow up survey of 1991 was done prior to the 1991-92 drought and before the introduction of the World Bank policy of Economic Structural Adjustment.

advance the position of women and in some instances situated women in a more vulnerable position. More recently, the laws implemented to advance women's position within the Zimbabwean society have failed to do so as the Customary Laws still prevail.

For instance, a recent court decision pertaining to women's inheritance has set back women's liberation twenty years (IRIN April 1999). The case was of a woman, Vennia Magaya, who had lost the inheritance of her deceased father to her half-brother. Following eviction from her father's house by her half-brother, Magaya took the case to the Supreme Court. According to Zimbabwe's laws and constitution, she had a clear claim as heir to the estate but under Customary Law of inheritance, the males of the family have claim, leaving the daughters and widows with nothing. The 5 to zero decision by the Supreme Court in favour of the half brother, with no option of appeal, meant that the laws of inheritance implemented to advance women's equality had been wiped clean. The court said that women "should never be considered adults within the family, but only as a junior male or teen-ager" contradicting the 1982 Majority Age Act which states that a woman over the age of 18 cannot be treated as a minor (Integrated Regional Information Network April 15, 1999, 1). In their ruling, the judges made specific reference to this act and said "that it had been interpreted too broadly and given rights to women they never had under customary law" (April 15, 1999).

Any legal advancement that women have made in the past has been dismissed by this decision and has placed women in the inferior position within society once again.

4.3. Population Issues

4.3.1. Family Planning

As noted in the above section, it is important to understand the country's history as fertility and population reflects the cumulation of choices, attitudes, social divisions, and availability of services over the years. Zimbabwe's history, particularly the role of the colonial powers, plays an important role in its present day Family Planning Programmes (FPP). Prior to independence, in the 1960s and 70s, there was an outright rejection of any attempts of the minority regime to implement birth control measures or FPPs by the black majority. The black majority viewed any policies implemented to control population as a way of curbing the black reproduction in order to increase white power and a restriction of their ability to 'replace' the sons and daughters that the blacks had lost in their war of liberation against the whites. Any attempts to control the population by Ian Smith's Rhodesian regime were viewed by some, including Robert Mugabe's ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union), as a "white colonialist plot against the black population" (Meldrum 1994, 3). Family planning during this period was based on a view by the Rhodesian ruling whites that population pressure was the primary cause of poverty and slow development and that population control was the remedy.

During the time of the voting in of the ZANU party in 1980, Robert Mugabe and his party were not pro-birth control and once he was in power he changed the name of the once minority controlled Family Planning Association to the Child Spacing Council. This change in name was partly to obliterate the population control orientations of the Family Planning Association. This newly named council was to encourage couples to space their children two to three years apart, not specifically to promote limiting family size through the use of contraceptives. Within a few years, however, Mugabe's government had a change of view regarding birth control due to the increasing annual population growth rate, which they perceived to play a role in the difficulties in achieving the forecasted economic growth rates. The government's main premise shifted in 1985 when they began to endorse smaller families and simultaneously increased funding of the parastatal agency under the safeguard of the ministry of Health, the re-named Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC).

Although Zimbabwe does not yet have a specific population policy, it does have an active and by standards of the continent, an effective family planning programme. To set the stage for the importance of a successful Family Planning Program (FPP), one must first examine Zimbabwe's statistics regarding population. The approximate population as of 1995 was 11 million and the annual rate of population growth was 3.13%. At this rate of growth the country will double its population in 25 years. The demographic age breakdown is of great importance as the per cent of Zimbabweans between the ages of zero to fourteen is 45.1% as of 1994. (Thomas and Maluccio 1996, 212). This is

pertinent to the design and considerations of family planning and birth control programs.

Zimbabwe's Family Planning Council has been heralded as a success in distribution and increase in access to family planning information and methods. The structure of the ZNFPC is quite unique which may account for the recorded success of their programs. A combination of Community Based Distributors, government clinics and public sector facilities provide family planning services through the Ministry of Health, municipal governments and district and rural councils. The ZNFPC has seen many changes over the years including the shift of emphasis from clinics and hospitals to that of Community Based Distributors (CBD). Many believe that this more grassroots approach to community family planning has been the backbone behind Zimbabwe leading Sub-Saharan Africa in declining fertility rates.

The Community Based Distributor, typically female, is selected by the community in which they work in. In theory, after a six-week training course conducted by the ZNFPC, the CBD is equipped with a bicycle, some elementary medical equipment and a supply of oral contraceptives and is sent out to visit the community. The CBD is to visit with each woman in the local community in an attempt to educate, motivate and screen her suitability for oral contraceptives and if appropriate, issue her a four-week supply. If after four visits the woman is not experiencing any method-related problems, she is supplied with three cycles of the pill and the CBD will continue to visit once every three months. "For families earning less than US\$50 per month the CBDs provide the pill free of

charge. For those few earning more than US\$50, they charge the nominal fee of Z\$0.15 for a month's supply of pills" (Meldrum 1994, 6). The goal of the CBD program is to reach those who otherwise would not have access to family planning services and education.

Even though Zimbabwe boasts a rate of contraceptive usage in 1994 of 43% of adult women, which is considerably higher than Africa's average of 14%, there have been criticisms of the emphasis of the pill by the CBDs (Meldrum 1994, 3). Although a full range of birth control methods are offered by the FPPs, including IUD, diaphragms, implants and surgical tubal ligations, by far the pill is the most popular contraceptive. The pill is used by more than 70 percent of Zimbabwean women overall and about 85 percent of rural women who use birth control (Meldrum 1994, 48). The high percent of pill use has been explained by the supporters of this contraceptive because of its convenience, suitability and affordability. Unfortunately, whether the pill is used effectively or safely has not been examined. Critics of the CBD programme believe that women should be given a choice as to methods of birth control and not be limited to oral contraceptives.

4.3.2. Education:

(A) Government Views on Education

Education is yet another factor that must be taken into consideration regarding the women, population and environment issue in Zimbabwe. At independence the Zimbabwean Government articulated the belief that education

was the basic right of every citizen, and therefore every child should have the opportunity to attend school. In 1980 free primary education was introduced and the expansion of facilities began. The government's target was that every child should have a primary school within five kilometres and a secondary school within eleven kilometres (Auret 1989). The communal areas were desperate at this time for schools as a result; the government encouraged the parents to build their own schools. The materials and funding for these communal area schools, provided by the government, coupled with the assistance of the communal residents, proved to be extremely successful especially at the primary school level. By 1986 there had been a 211% increase in the number of primary and secondary schools, with the greatest expansion in the rural areas (Auret 1989, 19).

At the Primary level the enrollment of girls and boys was and remains roughly the same. However, once they reach Grade Seven, there are fewer girls than boys. There is very little difference in the performance of girls and boys at the Grade Seven level but by this time thousand of girls have dropped out (Getecha and Chipka 1995, 25). Pregnancy, heavy domestic demands and early marriages force young girls to leave school. Unfortunately, many parents support the idea of girls staying home and fulfilling their presupposed domestic duties.

Women from the region of Murewa state:

Our own parents have a lot to answer for committing us to misery. They destroy us the moment they choose to send boys to school, leaving us girls at home. Their thinking is that we will get married and thereafter live happily forever. This is crooked thinking as there is nothing like that. Not sending daughters to school is the same as raising slaves (Getecha and Chipka 1995, 24).

Traditional beliefs and cultural mores play a significant role in the education of the girls of Zimbabwe and must be considered in the attempt to increase the female enrollment at secondary and senior school level.

Informal education, such as literacy programmes also grew in numbers since independence. Literacy classes were established through a literacy campaign launched by the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs. Three out of four people in attendance were women and a majority of these women had never had the opportunity to attend schooling at any level (25). Unfortunately, the number of literacy classes and therefore the number of women benefiting from them have dropped considerably since 1991 due to a lack of resources as a result Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). The particular ways in which ESAPs have affected the lives of Zimbabwean women will be examined later in this chapter.

(B) Education and Family Planning

Education, in the realm of family planning, can be addressed in two ways. First the education that is involved in the family planning programmes themselves and secondly how the education level of women and men affects the acceptance and success of these programmes. The ZNFPC implemented the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) unit in 1982, which played a crucial role in Zimbabwe's family planning programmes. The first step of this unit was to gain support of the FPPs from the politicians and encourage them to include positive messages of family planning in their public addresses. As mentioned prior, during this time the government was supporting the ideology of child spacing and not family planning. Over the period of the mid 1980s, as the government accepted the new role that family planning took in the overall development of Zimbabwe, the IEC unit was able to shift its focus to educating and gaining awareness of the masses in the area of family planning.

The IEC unit found that more women had a desire to have greater male involvement in family planning. It was found that by in large, men were not opposed to family planning, yet had misconceptions of it. For instance, it was found that many men believe that if a woman took an oral contraceptive, they become infertile, or that taking the pill would lead to women becoming more promiscuous. Fear and ignorance on the part of the Zimbabwean men were and still are to some extent the basis of these misconceptions and the target for the IEC. Educating the men in the truths of family planning is important but due to the patriarchal system of society in Zimbabwe, especially in rural areas, traditional

attitudes and beliefs still situate the many men in the position of power and decision making as to whether or not a woman uses family planning methods. Therefore, women have not gained any decision making power, but are under the control of a man who may or may not have a better understanding of the issue of family planning.

The IEC unit has also played a significant role in educating school age girls and boys in Zimbabwe. The unit consists of youth advisors that travel to rural schools and lecture on 'family life education.' The youth advisors mainly advocate abstinence but also inform the students about sexually transmitted disease and in conjunction with teachers, discuss the issues surrounding reproductive health. As Zimbabwe consists of such a large population sector under the age of fourteen years, education and awareness at the school age level, especially for girls, is crucial.

Many view education as a powerful predictor of both fertility and contraceptive usage but the relationships between education and the use of birth control and fertility are far from linear and have changed shape in recent years in Zimbabwe. This is evident particularly if various age brackets are examined. For instance, a 1996 study done for the World Bank by Duncan Thomas and John Maluccio in Zimbabwe found "that among women age thirty-five and above, there is no significant relationship between education and the number of children ever born; among younger women, however, the relationship is negative and significant, and even women with relatively little education have fewer children than their less educated peers" (Thomas and Maluccio 1996, 191).

Woman's schooling is assumed to result in lower fertility and, by inference, higher contraceptive use through four channels. The first channel being that of 'wage affect', which refers to the possible increase in wage if a woman continues with her schooling. Therefore, schooling raises the 'price' of children as the wage benefits of schooling may induce women to achieve higher levels of schooling, delaying the onset of child birth. Secondly, women with higher levels of education may develop higher aspirations for their own children's schooling. These aspirations may lead them to have fewer children in order to be able to invest in more schooling per child. The third channel refers to the lowering of child mortality. Women with a higher level of schooling are more likely to be more effective in raising healthy children. The final channel refers to the more educated a woman is, the more effective her use of contraceptives (Ainsworth, Beegle, and Nyamete 1996). The issue of literacy is important at this junction as many rural women are illiterate which may result in a lack of shared information regarding given birth control methods as much of health care information is disseminated through the written word. Although these channels seem to be an effective means by which education increases contraceptive use, it has been noted that the level of education in question is of importance. It has been found by some researchers that in Zimbabwe while "education does have a positive impact on the probability of adopting modern methods of contraception, the effect is only significant after women have completed several years of primary school" (Thomas and Maluccio 1995, 10). Therefore the importance of girls continuing their education past the primary level is exemplified.

4.3.3. Conclusion:

Zimbabwe's family planning programme and its components have been heralded as one of the most successful in Sub-Saharan Africa in decreasing population growth rates. It seems that the Zimbabwean government holds a population first view in that implementing family planning may be an easier substitute for the more difficult structural and institutional changes. Although Zimbabwe's FPPs have introduced women to various contraceptive methods and attempted to educate women and girls, women's agency will not advance as long as population is seen as the sole perpetrator of the environment, poverty and hunger and family planning the solution.

4.4. Zimbabwe's Environment and Women

Zimbabwe's environment has been damaged intensively in the last decade as the result of numerous droughts 1990, 1992 and 1994. These natural disasters have brought havoc and desperation to the Zimbabwean people, particularly the poor and the women. The argument surrounding the origin and cause of such droughts is beyond the scope of this thesis. What will be examined are the ideologies surrounding the aspects of environmental destruction within the realm of women and population.⁵

The communal areas of Zimbabwe, in which 65% of the population live,

⁵ Issue of land distribution between minority and majority is a vitally important one for Zimbabwe but this thesis is concerned with the distribution between men and women of Zimbabwe.

face various environmental problems. (<http://www.ecouncil.ac.cr/ngoexchg/enda.htm>) The environmental degradation within the communal areas is looked upon as a result of the high population pressure. These are the areas that have been effected most drastically by poverty and lack of alternatives due to such development initiatives as ESAP and northern style large-scale commercial farming. There is no argument that increase in population density has a negative affect on the environment but as in the case of the Zimbabwean communal lands as with many other rural areas of developing countries, there is more to the solution of environmental degradation than population control. Other factors include skewed distribution of resources and land and imposed northern styles of development. However, as seen in the Zimbabwean government 1992 *State of the Environment Report*, a reduction in fertility is a stated necessity in order to curb Zimbabwe's environmental degradation. In support of this document, it does state that "in order to reduce fertility, women need the opportunity to become better educated, obtain better jobs, marry at a later age and bear fewer children" (Zimbabwe 1992, 29). However, as seen earlier in this chapter, women's advancement within Zimbabwean society has been diminished due to cultural attitudes and the negative spin-offs of northern style development initiatives.

The major environmental problems within the communal areas are forest degradation, soil erosion and degradation and water resource degradation, all of which are interrelated. Water resource degradation includes the decrease in water levels and the contamination of the quality of water.

With an increase in use of fertilizers in agricultural production, there is an increase in the fertilizer residue that is entering the water tables through seepage and into lakes through run off. The African Development Bank Country Environmental Profile 1995 states "in some regions, nitrate and fluoride levels in groundwater exceed the permissible levels for drinking water established by the WHO" (African Development Bank 1995, 18). In regard to the quantity of water available, during the 1991-92 drought, many wells and boreholes ran dry due to lack of rain and the increase in water for irrigation, putting not only agricultural production at risk but also survival of the communal area residents.

Soil erosion has several adverse effects and has costs Zimbabwe millions of hectares of soil with an annual cost of soils lost estimated at 2.8 billion Zimbabwean dollars (1987). It has been documented by the African Development Bank that "eighty percent of the eroded lands are in the communal areas while the remainder are in the commercial farming areas" (African Development Bank 1995). This has resulted in the loss of topsoil, which is necessary for plant growth, ultimately resulting in the abandonment of arable land. As there is a trickle down of negative effects, with an increase in soil erosion comes an increase in runoff and for those particularly on communal lands, farmers cannot not afford to compensate adequately for loss of nutrients by applying fertilizers. Population density in these communal lands coupled with the reoccurring droughts has left many in the communal lands struggling for survival.

It is said that the major cause of land degradation in Zimbabwe is the removal of vegetation cover, which exposes the land to the process of soil erosion. With the

shift to a market oriented economy and the pressure to generate hard currency, intensive clearing of forests and land for agriculture (including coffee and tea plantations) creates a multitude of negative environmental effects in Zimbabwe. It is estimated that 60,000 hectares of woodland are cleared annually for agriculture in Zimbabwe (ENDA & ZERO 1992). The hardest hit areas by deforestation are the communal areas “where a 50% decline in vegetative cover was recorded between 1963 and 1978 and by 1980, about 20% of the country’s communal areas were experiencing wood shortages” (42).

Woodfuel shortages affect all residents of the communal areas but particularly the traditional collectors of firewood, the rural women. The shortages result in longer trips to collect fuel therefore imposing additional burden on their time which ultimately result in negative implications for their other tasks, housekeeping, child rearing and agriculture (ENDA & ZERO 1992). Problems of the physical environment for women in the communal areas directly effect their capability to successfully fulfill their various roles. The deforestation and water shortages has resulted in many women walking five to ten kilometres to collect firewood and similar distances to collect water (Zimbabwe Women’s Bureau 1992).

Zimbabwe’s Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) aims to “improve the livelihoods of rural people by enabling them to manage their environment in a way that could lead to their development” (http://www.campfire-zimbabwe.org/facts_09.html 1999, 1). CAMPFIRE is a collaborative group of organizations and government

departments including the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management, the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, Zimbabwe Trust, The African Resources Trust, World Wide Fund for Nature, ACTION, and the Centre for Applied Social Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe. CAMPFIRE comes from a WED perspective in that this group of organizations attempts to include women in the decision making process as it pertains to land use and natural resource management and also values women's particular knowledge and ties to the environment as a result of traditional roles. A recent study by CAMPFIRE showed that Zimbabwean rural women "are more knowledgeable about different tree species than men, due to their harvesting of fruit, wood and fodder. Women use a great variety of wild foods in Zimbabwe: some 20 species of wild vegetables, 42 wild fruit, 29 insects and four edible grasses" (CAMPFIRE 1999, 1). This shift towards a WED approach no longer views women as victims of their situations but as a key source of solutions and change.

Under the leadership of CAMPFIRE Association the collaborative group aims to empower whole communities – including women. CAMPFIRE believes that women must play a key role in environmental management due to their reliance on the environment. This organization has attempted to bring women into the decision making process by having them participate on their committees and also by funding women focused agricultural extension services. CAMPFIRE acknowledges the legal, traditional and cultural constraints that women face but

believes that through training, education and workshops, women will empower themselves and become better managers of the environment.

This sharing of information and discussion of environmental problems is an important step. In Zimbabwe Women's Voices 1995, women stated that "the main cause of environmental problems is the lack of information. We are not informed, and do not debate these issues" (Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre 1995, 61). Women's knowledge and expertise must be incorporated into the debate and the outcomes.

4.5. Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) and Zimbabwean Women

4.5.1. Characteristics of Zimbabwe's ESAP

It would be unjust for the women of Zimbabwe if this thesis did not examine how structural adjustment has affected their lives directly and indirectly. To set the background for the introduction of the adjustment programmes within Zimbabwe, one must first understand the shift in ideology within the governing body. As stated in previous sections, after Independence the Zimbabwean government from a socialist standpoint, attempted to expand health care, education, and improve upon overall human development issues. Ironically, it is the investment by the government in these social programmes that has been highlighted as a major cause of the Zimbabwean government's budget deficit and external debt. These factors coupled with abandonment of socialist ideology for that of neo-liberal, market centred ideology, and the lack of alternatives following

the devastating droughts of 1991 and 1994, ultimately resulted in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund pressuring Zimbabwe to incorporate their form of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) in 1990 (Government of Zimbabwe 1990, 1991 in Gordon 1997).

Zimbabwe's ESAP had all the characteristics of SAPs imposed on other nations by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund including, trade liberalization, devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar, cuts in state spending on social services, and removal of state subsidies on basic commodities. For the purpose of this thesis I will examine the ESAP conditions that most predominately affected the Zimbabwean women including the rising cost of living through the devaluation of currency and the removal of subsidies and the most detrimental ESAP conditions for women of Zimbabwe, the cuts in social services. It is interesting to note that the World Bank acknowledges that "the quality and distribution of social services in Zimbabwe have improved enormously over the past decade (from 1980 to 1990) and that women and children have been the prime beneficiaries" but little is said about the reversal in these gains since the introduction of ESAP (World Bank, 1991 in Gordon 1997, 267).

4.5.2. ESAP and Health

The expansion and equity of medical care was an early goal for independent Zimbabwe. In 1980 free medical care was provided to the lowest income groups, those earning Z\$150 or less a month (268). This expansion included the repair of health facilities that were damaged in the liberation,

construction of new health facilities, particularly in the rural areas, and a massive programme of primary health. "By 1990 the infant mortality rate (IMR) had declined from the 1980 level of 140% to 61% live births whilst the child mortality rate (CMR) (ages 1-4 years) had reached an all time low of 22%" (UNICEF, 1994 in Gordon 1997, 269). In regard to women and health, ante and post- natal programmes had made significant gains in the decade since Independence resulting in the "Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) stabilizing at 100 deaths per 1000 deliveries, an historical all-time low" (Gordon 1997, 269). Although the urban/rural disparities remained in regard to health care delivery, and the majority of funding still was allocated to curative forms of health services, the gains that were made during this decade certainly formed a base on which further improvements could be built.

Unfortunately, since the introduction of ESAP in 1990, the gains mentioned above have been reversed. The quality and quantity of health care has fallen in proportion to the cuts in spending in this sector by the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare. In the 1991-92 fiscal year per capita spending on health care fell by 18%, by 12% in 1992-93 and by 1994 it had fallen 34% from its 1991 level (UNICEF, 1994 in Gordon 1997). In 1991 cost recovery measures were introduced which included fees for treatment of maternity services and an increase in user fees for health services. For instance, in 1994 health fees in rural hospitals and health clinics increased rose by 117% (217). As a result of the cuts in expenditure for the maternal care programmes coupled with the user fee increases, women of lower incomes are not able to receive pre and post delivery

care. It is these women, due to poverty, lack of empowerment and heavy work burdens, who are most at risk and are in desperate need of medical care. As the costs for health care rises along with cost of living and real wages remain the same, the Z\$150 or less a month cut off for free medical care did not rise. By not increasing this monthly income limit, thousands of people are removed from free medical services. Ultimately, the ill cannot afford to go to clinics and hospitals for treatment and therefore stay home and must be taken care of by the primary care giver of the family, the woman, increasing her workload.

ESAP, through the cuts in social spending, has also directly impacted women's lives in Zimbabwe through the loss of employment. Many women are employed within the health sector as nurses, aides and general supportive positions. Through these cuts, women have been dismissed from their positions or had their salaries cut resulting in further difficulties in advancing in society and supporting their families.

4.5.3. ESAPs and Education

Education successes within the first years of independence were great. Free primary school for all, expansion of facilities and an increase in expenditure by the government. As part of ESAPs condition of reduction in government spending on social welfare, primary school fees were introduced in urban areas. Although fees were not introduced in rural areas, other costs such as school uniforms, sports equipment and school supplies increased. Secondary school fees in both urban and rural areas increased dramatically over the years since

the introduction of ESAP. "In April 1997 school fees rose yet again, by 43-90% for urban primary and secondary schools, and by 25% for rural secondary schools" (Business Herald, 25 April 1997 cited in Gordon 1997, 274).

Unfortunately, the official statistics referring to the impacts of ESAP are not gender-desegregated but there are indications that girls have been more negatively affected than boys have. The government of Zimbabwe has created a monitoring body of the ESAP referred to as the Social Dimension of Adjustment. In 1995 this monitoring body found that "among the reasons for not being in school, 'because it was too expensive' was mentioned more frequently in all age groups for girls than boys: 34% for girls... compared to 28% for boys" (ZWRCN, 1995, p.20 cited in Gordon 1997, 274). With these increases in costs of education, women have the additional burden of ensuring that the appropriate sacrifices are made in household spending in order to keep her children in school. Entrenched in this dilemma is the scenario a woman faces if she can only keep some of her children in school. Such that "studies suggest that parents, influenced by cultural practices and gender typical perceptions and attitudes, will educate boys rather than girls when times are hard" (Gordon 1997, 274). The patriarchal attitudes and traditional mores coupled with financial hardships play havoc on girls completing their education.

4.5.4. ESAP and the Cost of Living

The increase in the cost of living as a result of the ESAP conditions has been disproportionately difficult for women. Within the first six months of ESAP

consumer prices increased by 24% and within that time the Zimbabwean dollar depreciated 97% followed by further devaluation in 1992 resulting in the re-classification of Zimbabwe by the International Monetary Fund from a middle to low-income country. The removal of government subsidies on basic food products, as a part of ESAP, is intended as a means to both cut government expenditures and 'free up' the market to allow for greater competition and increased efficiency among food producers. However, what this ESAP condition has achieved is the exacerbation of household resources as women struggle to feed their families. Women respond to the economic crises in a number of ways. Those who were not already economically active seek informal work and formal employment, increasing their already heavy workload. Also, women alter the quality and quantity of the family diet and often cut back on their own food intake. Ultimately, the conditions of ESAPs affecting the cost of living have a more serious impact on the poor women of Zimbabwe.

4.5.5. Conclusion

The gains of the decade immediately following independence have all but eroded since the introduction of ESAP in Zimbabwe. Health and education were two such areas that measurable gains were made for women and girls after independence and since 1990 those gains have been reversed. ESAPs conditions have increased the already burdensome workload of women by cutting social spending therefore passing on the inefficiency to women. Women struggle to feed their families with a shrinking family budget and decreasing food

subsidies and more and more women and girls are missing the opportunities for long term empowerment. Since 1990, under the IMF and World Bank inspired structural adjustment programmes, the country has seen any gains they had achieved disintegrate at the whim of external policy makers who insisted upon the notion that the benefits would eventually 'trickle down' to all, including women.

4.6. Feminist Response

Zimbabwean feminist writer Patricia McFadden examines the population issue by looking at the class and race division of population control. McFadden puts forth similar points to that of Shiva and Mies particularly in reference to northern styles of contraceptives and the issue surrounding consumption in the North. She states that "population control is not haphazard. It is specifically focused on particular classes of people and poor women constitute the bulk of these classes" (SAPEM May 1995, 43). She advocates that the black women of Zimbabwe are targeted with northern population control ideology and methods resulting in denial of the rights of women to control their fertility. McFadden takes this argument one step further by examining the testing in the South of anti-fertility vaccines that are based on the premise to make a woman's body treat male sperms as foreign objects. At this time there is no safe means of terminating these effects once vaccinated, resulting in long term or permanent infertility. McFadden states that "this new twist in population control ideology will not even permit Black women to have a fertility" (43).

In regard to the environment, McFadden calls for the need to make the critical linkages between numbers, resources available, patterns of consumption and power. Macro-economic policies which continue to allow for the flow of resources from south to north, and the technology and methods of population control which are developed and controlled by a small lobby in the North and legitimized through national sponsored family planning programmes must be examined in order to fully understand the population and environment issue.

4.7. Summary of Chapter

This chapter has established a better understanding of advancement since independence of Zimbabwe and its repercussions for the women, particularly those in the communal areas, and for the environment. As a signatory to the Rio Declaration, Zimbabwe has acknowledged the efforts and practical actions necessary to protect the environment, unfortunately the development model adopted puts this country in a difficult position. Zimbabwe has experienced a shift away from traditional methods of land use to methods that are appropriate for the market economy for which the government strives. These methods coupled with a skewed distribution of population within the communal lands, has resulted in gross environmental degradation in these areas. These two factors take the issue beyond that of population numbers to the examination of colonial allocation of land and northern models of development. This chapter has shown that Zimbabwean women have a direct role within the environment and for them to become effective participants within its management, there is a need

continued efforts in shifting disempowering customs and traditional beliefs towards incorporating women into the debate and the outcomes. Unfortunately, disempowering decisions such as the Magaya case coupled with the recent move of the Department of Women's affairs from the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperatives to the Ministry of political Affairs may imply that the government is backing away from the commitments made to women's advancement within Zimbabwe following the war (Gallin and Ferguson 1991, 215).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Summary of Thesis

The goal of this thesis has been to show that because women have been targeted as the primary actors of population growth within the South and ultimately the primary destroyers of the environment it is vital to address alternative analyses of the issue of population, environment and women. The analysis of the population and environment debate ought to be centred on the critical importance of including woman as agents in all areas of life not as only reproducers. This chapter begins with a summary of the first four chapters of the thesis in order to highlight the parameters of the issues around population, women and environment. I then present an outline of the strands of the discussion that in my opinion have hindered and continue to hinder the advancement of women as well as the strands which I believe ought to go forward.

I began this thesis by outlining the problem, rationale and method by which the issue would be examined and criticized. This chapter concluded with a clarification of terms relevant to the literature and evident in the discourse. This was followed in Chapter Two by an examination of the various opinions, theories and conceptual approaches that have historically and currently shaped the thinking on this issue. Malthus and Boserup represent two dominant viewpoints

emphasizing the linear relationship between population and the environment. Paul Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* also falls within this perspective emphasizing the importance of reversing the trend of population growth and falling food production in order to avoid mass starvation of those in the South and total environmental collapse. Following the linear views, this chapter examined the multiplicative and mediating perspectives, with emphasis on quantitative and social factors respectively. The development-dependency perspectives took a more holistic look at the issue of population and environment by melding all of the social, cultural and institutional factors that influence the relationship into the larger concept of development. It also examined how this development process mediates population and environment relations. This chapter went on to show how the issue of population, women and environment has been addressed has changed over time within the international arena. The manner of dealing with women has shifted from viewing them as victims and homemakers who are objects of aid to seeing them as agents in need of empowerment. Parallel to this, the ideology behind the population issue has shifted from that of development as the best contraceptive to the call for women's control over decisions pertaining to population and environment and indeed their whole lives. Finally the chapter examined the northern and southern ecofeminist perspectives which provide a critical analysis of development and which put forward a more holistic view of the population, women and environment relationship. Their views call attention to notions of cultural, social, and individual rights and responsibilities that particularize how women do and ought to participate in development.

Chapter Three examined the theoretical frameworks that address the issue of women in development. It was shown that although the predominant ideologies of WID, WAD and GAD do not address the issue of environment and population exclusively, it is important to understand their underpinnings as these perspectives directly affect and influence the policy and programmes regarding population and the environment within the development field. This section of women in development portrayed the shift in perspectives from 'add women and stir' to that of WED which recognizes and utilizes women's unique knowledge and experiences in order to benefit and empower themselves, the development process and the environment. This chapter concluded with examining women's roles, their access to resources, the importance of their participation and ultimately their empowerment. This provided a larger context within which to observe the role that reproductive rights play within the population and environment debate.

Chapter Four considered the case of women in Zimbabwe. This example enabled us to observe how the theoretical frameworks and various perspectives discussed earlier play out in a concrete situation. I chose Zimbabwe because I had personal experience working there. Following a brief overview of the role Zimbabwean women played prior to independence, I examined Zimbabwe in more detail, focusing on the law, family planning, education, the environment and what role women play within each. The chapter concluded with a look at how structural adjustment policies have affected women directly and indirectly with a feminist response to the situation that Zimbabwe faces presently.

5.2 The Debate

5.2.1. Women's Agency

It is important at this point to identify strands of the debate that are preventing the advancement of women and those that ought to go forward. Going forward in this instance refers to the improvement in women's agency within development through the increase in empowerment, equality and recognition of their particular knowledge regarding the issues at hand. We have seen throughout this thesis that the empowerment of women has been on the development agenda in the recent past and today but what has not been clear is the follow-through to specifics that achieve agency for women. In the past it has been noted that women have been the recipients of many development initiatives in particular dealing with development and population. Past ideologies have proven to situate women as destroyers of the environment due to their reproductive role, ignoring their particular knowledge and role within environmental management and their restricted role within the decisions surrounding reproduction. Cultural, legal, traditional and religious constraints have been ignored as playing a role in population and environment relations.

Agency for women include their legal right to access of resources, full reproductive freedom and rights to support that freedom, equality, access to education and training, and the inclusion within the development discourse as how best to promote and attain women's empowerment. Agency for women therefore, is important within the population and environment debate, as women

must become agents of their own lives in order to positively affect the environment for which they live in and to have control over their fertility.

5.2.2. Strands That Have Hindered Women's Advancement

Ideologies based on the premise that increasing population growth is the main perpetrator of environmental deterioration leads to population control policies in which women are ultimately the main targets. Demographically driven population policies used as a response to environmental degradation have only proven to reduce women's freedom and empowerment in terms of control over their own fertility and reproduction. Ecofeminists advance this argument by stating that including population policies as agenda items at such gatherings as the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development lends credibility to the ridiculous claims. One such claim is that the pressure of people and cattle on the land is responsible for all environmental damage (Shiva 1994). These gatherings must look at a broader spectrum of factors that affect women's role and the general state of the environment.

In Zimbabwe, population growth, from the perspective of the dominant model, is seen as the foremost environmental problem for which family planning and wide spread contraceptive use are the solutions. Zimbabwe's Family Planning Programme, with its emphasis on the birth control pill in order to reduce population growth, was seen as the answer to low economic gains following independence. This view that contraceptive use leads to development ignores the other factors affecting population growth such as poverty, lack of women's

education, inequality in resource distribution, cultural traditions and the lack of social security for the elderly which plays a role in partners choosing large families.

As evident from Chapter four, the implementation of neoliberal style of development in Zimbabwe has been detrimental to both women and the environment. This narrow model of development ruled by structural adjustment programmes has ignored women's roles within development and has drastically affected the environment and women's ability to coexist within it. SAPs have negatively affected women's position within Zimbabwean society by increasing the roles which they play and by making their pre-existing roles more strenuous and time consuming. This market oriented development model is based on the premise of economic gain. Therefore the increase in agency of women is as well as the state of the country's environment are secondary.

This aside, Zimbabwe has attempted to improve the status of women since independence and as a result, birth rates declined, population slowed and management of resources improved. Unfortunately, the resurgence of traditional laws and beliefs coupled with the conditions surrounding SAPs have all but erased any advancement that women had achieved. The 1999 Supreme Court decision to reward Vennia Magaya's fathers estate, of over which she had full legal claim, to her half-brother, eradicated any legal advancement women had achieved through the adoption of the Inheritance Law or the Majority Age Act. A lack of alternatives due to the demands from such international institutions as IMF and the World Bank coupled with the legal and cultural barriers women face,

may unfortunately lead to further environmental degradation as well as a downward spiral of women's empowerment within the development process.

A narrow view of the relationship between environment and population also excludes the roles which women play within environmental management and their particular knowledge as a result of women's ties to nature. The WED as well as the ecofeminist perspective view women's knowledge as a pertinent factor in establishing environmentally sustainable development programmes. To ignore women's ties to the environment is to exclude the special knowledge and skills they can bring into the equation. These strands of the discourse surrounding the issue of women, population and the environment have hindered women's empowerment and agency and will continue to do so unless there is an alternative analysis applied.

5.2.3. Strands of the Debate That Ought to Go Forward:

Various strands of the population and environment debate ought to go forward in order to enable greater agency for women in the South. A shift away from the ideology of cause and affect as it pertains to population and environment is important. The focus ought to move beyond what have been the two most prominent strategies namely promoting necessary actions to decrease population and the education of women merely about the benefits of fewer children. Rather the focus should become the development of strategies, which incorporate many, if not all, aspects affecting women of the South. A more holistic way of addressing the issue must be embraced by including within the

analyses the cultural, religious, gender and traditional factors that affect the role which women play within the environment/population relationship.

Another strand that ought to go forward is the acknowledgment of the importance of women's agency at the international, national and local levels. Declarations such as *Agenda 21* as a result of the 1992 Rio conference that called for women's full and equal participation in development activities and environmental management and Cairo's 1994 *Programmes of Action* which focused on meeting the needs of individual women and men, rather than on demographic targets, are the foundation for the holistic analysis of the issue. During Cairo the majority of nations present accepted universal access to reproductive health information and services as a goal to be reached by 2015. They also accepted a broader understanding regarding sexual and reproductive rights. These rights include the rights to reproductive health, reproductive decision-making, equality and equity for women and men and sexual and reproductive security. The advancement of women's rights as human rights and the recognition that these rights have a direct link to the state of the environment will provide women an opportunity to play an equal role in the development process.

The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in addition to endorsing all of Cairo's recommendations on reproductive rights and health services, education and information, recognized and examined the central role women play in managing natural resources. This call for the equal participation of women in making policies and decisions about natural resource management

and rehabilitation at all levels ought to advance in order that women can take effective environmental actions along with men in homes, communities and workplaces. The concept of women playing an integral role in the management of resources as well as how women's actions and capabilities are shaped by poverty, access to and control over resources. This coupled with their role in the decision making process constitute the foundation of the WED perspective which may prove to be a theoretical perspective beneficial to both the environment and women of the South.

Ecofeminist perspectives of the women, population and environment issue put forth an alternative analysis that ought to progress. Specifically, the ecofeminist notion of full participation of women within the development process ought to progress forward in order to advance women's agency. Participation, from this perspective, includes women regaining greater autonomy with regard to their sexuality, body and reproductive capacity and freedom to choose their family size. Ecofeminists demand not only participation but also full and equal rights surrounding women in order to enforce this freedom and be effective agents.

Also within the ecofeminist perspective is the continued criticism of the role the North plays within this issue. Beyond that of population numbers and demographic targets, ecofeminists highlight the particular roles which Northern consumption and consumerism play within the population and environment relationship. Ecofeminists such as Shiva and Mies openly criticize organizations, governments or participants of international meetings who tend to identify the

South as the source of all environmental and population problems and the North, with its technology and capital, as the source of all environmental and population growth solutions. Instead, such ecofeminists address the issue of nonlocal demand for resources within their analysis of the relationship between population and the environment. The criticism surrounding the North's consumption patterns effect on the South's environment shifts the focus of the debate from that of population policies to that of a more holistic examination of all of the factors involved.

Ecofeminists examination and critique of the dominant Northern model of development leads to further understanding of the shortcomings of such theories. Ecofeminist discourse highlights some of the important conceptual links between women and nature and how the notion of northern 'maldevelopment' has resulted in violence to both women and nature. Ways of combating this 'maldevelopment' sometimes embracing the women/nature relationship is proposed through an alternative ecofeminist vision of a more egalitarian and harmonious future society. The ecofeminists' critique of the dominant development paradigms coupled with their efforts to theorize about women's relationships to the environment and its protection, as well as their role in population growth and control are critical in advancing this debate.

5.3. Conclusions

I contend that, in order to effectively shift the debate to a more empowering and useful level for the purposes of understanding and policy-

making, it is necessary to look at the issue of environment, population and women from a holistic perspective, incorporating all the factors which affect each element of the debate. The ideologies premised on the dominant paradigms of development have not resulted in women's agency but instead have contributed to their demise within societies of the South. Ecofeminism, its shortcoming aside, offers a more holistic and agency oriented analysis of the relationship.

Furthermore, many ecofeminists, especially those of the South, join theory to practice in working out the practical implications of their analyses. As this school of thought evolves, it ought to provide the foundation for a debate that will be geared to the empowerment and improved agency of women in the South. Agency and empowerment ought to be achieved through reducing poverty, improving health services, enhancing education, achieving sustainable development, abating excessive consumption, balancing the skewed distribution of resources and attaining gender equity and equality. While the rhetoric of the international community, including various special women's conferences, is moving in this direction, there is still a lot to be achieved in terms of the implementation of strategies to make this rhetoric concrete. Whereas dominant ideologies highlighted in this thesis work against this reality, they must be addressed and confronted.

It is important to note that there has been progress made within the debate from Ehrlich's passionate defense of population control to the inclusion of women's rights and empowerment into the agenda but unfortunately in the majority of southern countries, women's agency has not been achieved.

Therefore, as the state of the world's environment becomes more evident on the development agenda, there is a need to simultaneously address women's agency and the role of population in affecting the natural environment in an empowering and holistic fashion.

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