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RE-NEGOTIATING THE MARITAL POWER STRUCTURE — THE CASE OF INTER-RACIAL/ETHNIC MARRIAGES IN ZIMBABWE*

TREASA GALVIN

Department of Sociology, Trinity College, Dublin (Ireland)

Abstract

The research work on which this article is based was concerned with changes in the internal dynamics of marital relationships when marriages were re-located to a changed socio-cultural environment. This article focuses on the link between spousal access to resources and conjugal power relationships as reflected in the marital decision-making process. For the research couples, the transition to the new normative order meant changes in spousal access to resources, spousal decision-making patterns and the marital power structure. This article considers how, for these couples, the marital power structure altered and was renegotiated in their new environment.

INTRODUCTION

MARRIAGES ARE CONTRACTED and family life established under different circumstances in a variety of contexts. Inter-racial and inter-ethnic marriages, not infrequently, involve spouses from different countries and continents. For such couples, the initial relationship and subsequent marriage and family life may be established in one spouse's country of origin. The potential to migrate to an alternative place of residence, namely that of the second spouse, is part of the context in which such marriages exist. When and why such couples choose to re-locate their marriages depends on a host of factors including historical ones.

When Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980, the Zimbabwean Government encouraged all Zimbabweans living abroad to return home with their skills.¹ Many of these returning residents had married citizens of other countries while living outside Zimbabwe. Many marriages between Zimbabweans and their foreign spouses were of an inter-racial nature and many couples also had children. In effect, a family unit and not an individual returned to Zimbabwe.

The couples on which this research was based consisted of inter-racial/ethnic marriages between Zimbabweans and foreign nationals, which

* This article arises from fieldwork for my doctoral thesis submitted to the Sociology Department, University of Zimbabwe.

¹ *The Herald*, 3 June, 1980; 6 June, 1980.

had been re-located from the foreign spouses' societies or a 'third' society to Zimbabwe. The fieldwork was conducted in Zimbabwe, over two years, from October 1985 to September 1987.

THE RESEARCH GROUP

The research group consisted of 46 inter-racial and inter-ethnic marriages between Zimbabweans² and foreign spouses from diverse cultural origins (Tables 1, 2). A control group of four 'all-Zimbabwean' couples characterised by inter-racial/inter-ethnic marriages, were included for comparative analysis. The largest number of marriages were those in which the foreign spouses were female and which were inter-racial in nature (Table 3).

Table 1
GROUPS OF COUPLES (N=50)

	<i>Inter-racial</i>	<i>Inter-ethnic</i>	<i>Total</i>
Zimbabwean man/ foreign spouse	27	16	43
Zimbabwean woman/ foreign spouse	3	0	3
Both spouses Zimbabwean	4	0	4
Total	34	16	50

Table 2
FOREIGN SPOUSES' COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN (N=46)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number</i>
Britain	8
United States of America	7
USSR	4
Lesotho	4
Australia	4
Ireland	3
Trinidad	2
Czechoslovakia	2
Austria, Jamaica, Canada, Poland, Finland, India, Zambia, Botswana, Cameroon, Swaziland, German Democratic Republic, South Africa	1 each

² The Zimbabwean spouses consisted of 37 Shona, seven Ndebele, one Shangani, and one Jew.

Table 3
DESCRIPTION OF CATEGORIES OF COUPLES (N=50)

<i>Group</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Total %</i>
A1	Inter-racial marriage Zimbabwean man/foreign spouse	27	54
A2	Inter-ethnic marriage Zimbabwean man/non-African foreign spouse	8	16
A3	Inter-ethnic marriage Zimbabwean man/African foreign spouse	8	16
B	Inter-racial marriage Zimbabwean woman/non-African foreign spouse	3	6
C	Inter-racial marriage both spouses Zimbabwean	4	8
Total		50	100

Informants were drawn from a number of social networks³ (composed of friends and acquaintances) centred around specific foreign spouses, which at times overlapped. The manner of generating the research group precluded any possibility of having an equal number of foreign spouses from different countries of origin, or an equal number of respondents in each category or group. Safilios-Rothschild (1970) and Olson and Rabunsky (1972) emphasised the importance of gathering data from multiple family members while Turk and Bell (1972) asserted that findings depend on which family member is the key informant. Lack of co-operation from both male and female Zimbabwean spouses, the deaths of two husbands, four divorces and two temporary periods of separation, during the fieldwork, made the interviewing of both spouses as a couple and each one individually (as originally envisaged) impossible. As women were the key informants, it is women's perceptions of their marriages, which formed the basis of this work.

Data was collected through the use of unstructured but focused in-depth interviews using an open-ended interview guide, rather than a set questionnaire or interview-schedule. The same range of information was, as far as possible, collected from all respondents. In addition to material

³ The networks in question were largely determined by the individual's view of those with whom they felt they were compatible, socially and economically. 'Socially compatible' implied foreign spouses from the same geographical area and cultural background, who shared leisure-time activities. 'Economically compatible' implied relatively similar household income. Both social and economic compatibility corresponded largely with the educational level and employment of the husband, and the couple's age group.

on other areas of the couples' lives, the interviews provided qualitative material on domestic organisation and marital behaviour and the changes which had occurred in both since the couples moved to Zimbabwe.

RESOURCE THEORY AND NORMATIVE RESOURCE THEORY

As marriage and family types are socially and culturally specific, migration exposes a marital relationship to a new normative order. When the research couples re-located from the societies of the foreign spouses, or a 'third' country, to Zimbabwe, their marital relationships went through processes of transition and change in response to the demands of a different socio-economic and cultural environment, most especially different marital and family structures. The result was changes in the internal dynamics of the marital relationships of these couples, in particular changes in the complex interaction between resources, power relationships and decision-making.

That a spouse's relative power in a marriage is influenced by their relative resources has been demonstrated by Blood and Wolfe's (1960) 'resource theory of family power' and subsequent studies in this area (Michel, 1967; Safilios-Rothschild, 1967; Buric and Zecivic, 1967; Szinovacz, 1987; Sabatelli and Shehan, 1993). Blood and Wolfe (1960) argued that culturally prescribed authority patterns could not adequately explain power relationships between husbands and wives, as personal resources also influence the balance of conjugal power. Resource theory argues that the balance of power in a marriage favours the spouse bringing the most resources into the marriage, where 'a resource may be defined as anything that one partner may make available to the other, helping the latter satisfy his needs or attain his goals' (Blood and Wolfe, 1960, 12). Strodtbeck (1951) found that spousal decision-making varied when the prevailing cultural norms legitimised one spouse's power position. The importance of the cultural context in which resources operate was the central concern of Rodman's (1967, 1970) work on 'normative resource theory', Burr's (1973) modification of Rodman's work and LaLiberte Richmond's (1976) study of Cuban immigrants to the USA. Additionally, LaLiberte Richmond (1976) noted that a modification or change in prevailing cultural norms influenced spousal interaction and impacted upon a spouse's role in marital decision-making.

In relation to marriage and family life a central focus of the 'power' literature has been on outcome rather than process (Cromwell and Olson 1975; Scanzoni, 1979). For the research couples, changes in their marital relationships, as the outcome of exposure to a changed normative order was important. But equally important was the process of transition and change itself.

While studies such as Schvaneveldt and Ihinger (1979) considered the relationship between kinship and marital power, the majority of studies

have focused on marital power. 'Family power' is conceptually problematic when the unit of analysis is the husband-wife dyad to the exclusion of the power of children and members of kinship groups. When considering power within the context of marriage, it is then necessary to differentiate between a conjugal power structure and a family power structure. The former refers specifically to the power relationships between spouses, while the latter refers in addition to those power relationships between a couple and their families or kin. Obviously there will be interaction and overlap between these power structures. Safilios-Rothschild's (1970, 540) assertion that family power is a 'multi-dimensional concept that is measured indirectly through behavioural acts in which the degree of one's power is put to the test', is relevant to both conjugal and family power structures. Specifically in relation to marriage, Oppong (1981, 115) noted that:

A spouse's power position may be thought of as consisting in his or her ability to alter the partner's behaviour to conform to that desired, even in spite of counter-demands and pressures from outsiders, especially in terms of the use of money and time upon objects, persons and interests valued by the spouse.

Once the families had re-located, the processes of transition and change in these marital relationships involved changes in factors which influenced the nature of spousal decision-making, which in turn was evidence of a changing marital power structure. Power is treated here as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, though the specific concern is with the factors that influence the relative power positions of spouses; the extent to which conjugal power relationships were reflected in the marital decision-making process and its outcome; and how the marital power structure altered and was re-negotiated in response to a new normative order.

TRANSITION AND CHANGE

Marriage re-conceptualised

These culturally heterogeneous relationships were contracted within the confines of a marital ideology different from that found in Zimbabwe. Prior to returning to Zimbabwe, non-African foreign spouses, among these couples, had experienced their pre-marital relationships and/or subsequent marriages mainly in societies where the normative order stressed individualistic concepts of monogamous marriage; spousal companionship; and the nuclear family as an economically and socially independent unit of husband, wife and children whose first responsibilities are to each other and who interact in varying degrees with each spouse's family.

Foreign spouses from within Africa were familiar with the concepts of marriage and the extended family found in their own societies, but which

could not be readily transferred to the Zimbabwean context given the social and cultural specificity of marriage and family forms.

Some foreign spouses had some knowledge of Zimbabwean society and family life, prior to arriving. Mrs ZF22 felt that:

My husband had always been very honest with me about Zimbabwe over the years abroad, he told me a lot about the country, its culture and peoples. And so, when I arrived I felt I had quite a lot of knowledge which was definitely of help to me in 'settling in'.

However, in general, foreign spouses' prior knowledge of Zimbabwean society was found to be insufficient as it did not provide what, at a later stage, were viewed as adequate and necessary details.⁴ For foreign spouses, the previous lack of association between the marital relationship and Zimbabwe as a possible, but unlikely, future place of residence, did not encourage interest in that other environment.

Though foreign spouses had conceptualised Zimbabwe as a country totally different from their own, they had not considered that such differences would result in changes in their own marital and family relationships. Not having lived, in many cases, outside their own societies, it was difficult to visualise how aspects of a new environment could drastically change behaviour and relationships.

The re-location of their marriages meant for these couples a change in the prevailing form and concept of marriage and family life to that found in Zimbabwe. In their changed environment, all foreign spouses encountered a form of marriage and family life with which they were previously unfamiliar and for which they were unprepared. Mrs ZF17 noted:

Visiting Zimbabwe made me aware of how the position of women here differed from what I had experienced at home.⁵ Having considered this issue, when back home, I finally decided that if I married and came to live in Zimbabwe, I would be able to cope with the changes in my status as a woman. Later on I found, after experiencing the situation for myself, that I had not really been able to visualise what life would really be like as a woman in Zimbabwe.

In contrast, though many Zimbabweans had been abroad for long periods prior to the country's independence, they returned to a familiar (but not unchanged) cultural environment.

Once re-located, the 'external' environment for the marriages in question here consisted (among other things) of the prevailing form and

⁴ Sources of information for foreign spouses included: their Zimbabwean spouse; other Zimbabwean friends; the media; area of university study — Southern Africa; and visits from members of the Zimbabwean spouse's family.

⁵ She felt that women in Zimbabwe were less aware of discrimination against them and less conscious of 'women's rights' than women in her own country.

concept of marriage and family life reflected in the structural features of a patrilineal society. In Zimbabwe, marriage is conceptualised within the extended family structure and the rights, duties and obligations associated with membership of the patrilineal kin group. Legitimate authority is vested in the role of husband as family head. A husband's role as kinsman and his associated rights, duties and obligations are the link between the conjugal household and the extended family. In Zimbabwe, these conjugal units were defined, in Fortes's (1971) terms, by the 'external' system, as part of an extended family, extending lineally and having a depth of several generations.

For foreign spouses, adjusting to a new environment most importantly meant adjusting to a new form and concept of marriage and family life and to the processes of transition and change in their marital relationships that resulted from the new 'external' environment. In theory about culturally homogeneous Western marriage, the four stages of the family life cycle (Glick, 1977; Klein and Aldous 1979) were too narrowly focused to deal adequately with these culturally heterogeneous marriages. The move by couples to Zimbabwe added, especially for foreign wives, adaptation to a different cultural context as an extra, indeed dominant, dimension of the process of marital transition and change. Mrs ZF11 met and married her husband in her country of origin. Three weeks after their marriage they returned to live in Zimbabwe. Though her husband had informed her of his wish and plan to return home, she did not feel that she had any influence in this respect. 'I would have liked us to have lived at 'home' for a few years but there was little I could do about it.' She found their move to Zimbabwe difficult for two reasons, both critical to the concept of transition. First, they were just beginning to get used to married life. Second, she had at the same time to adjust to a new cultural environment.

The prevailing concept of marriage and family life found in Zimbabwe meant for these couples a re-definition of spousal roles. The Zimbabwean concept of marriage stressed a husband's authority within the marriage and his role as family breadwinner. Foreign spouses found their roles as wife and mother emphasised. Specific laws, such as those related to the taxation of married women,⁶ depleted married women's salaries, stressed the husband's role as family breadwinner and reinforced gender differentiation and socially restricting roles for women. The dichotomy between the roles of husband and wife, which was socially emphasised, became part of the marital relationship, replacing for these couples the more equitable roles of husband and wife previously experienced in their

⁶ At the time of this research, the salary of a married woman was added to that of her husband as the family taxpayer [Income Tax Act, Chapter 181, Section 10 (2) and (27)]. Financially, the result was that a married woman shouldered a disproportionate amount of the family tax burden.

conjugal relationships. Hood (1986, 354) noted, 'before one person can assume all or part of another's role, the other must relinquish all or part of that role. *Role relinquishment* is therefore a precondition for the allocation of family roles.' As spousal roles were re-defined, a wife saw her status within the marriage decrease, as her husband's increased. Foreign wives suggested that they were the ones whose roles had changed, while their husbands did not seem interested in reverting back to the earlier, more equitable phase of the marriage.

Household resources

Income and education are the two most notable resources available to spouses. Safilios-Rothschild (1976) broadened the range of resources exchanged between spouses to include socio-economic, affective and expressive resources, companionship, sex, services, and power in the relationship. Employment has been found to be an important power resource for spouses, as well as a basis for husband's authority in marriage (Bernard, 1981; Hood, 1983). In relation to power and resources, Szinovacz (1987, 665) concluded:

Power bases include tangible and intangible resources that may originate from personal attributes or the individual's position within the family and other social systems.

The main flaw in delimiting spousal resources in a Western idiom is the conceptualisation of resources as internal to the marriage and thus as necessarily emanating from the spouses themselves. Consideration must be given to the range of non-conjugal or external resources to which a spouse may have access, which emanate from sources independent of that spouse. In this respect, Safilios-Rothschild (1970) considered the contributions of parents and in-laws to the dynamics of marital power, noting that both internal and external resources may be used by spouses to enhance their power positions within the marriage. Oppong (1981, 115) identified among these external factors which influence the relative power position of spouses, 'the type of occupational and kinship positions each maintains outside the conjugal family, as well as . . . the prescribed and traditional authority patterns of the cultures to which they belong'.

Spouses among the research couples, both individually and jointly, put into the conjugal household resources that contributed to the maintenance of the marital relationship and to the organisation and functioning of the household. Among many such resources were money and other material items; time and effort; love and affection; sex; companionship; understanding and shared experiences. The move by couples to Zimbabwe affected the financial and other resources that each spouse brought into the marital household.

The occupations of spouses when the premarital relationships began (Table 4) indicated that for 92.6 per cent of couples in Group A, one or both partners were at university, or one was at university while the other was undergoing some form of non-university tertiary training. In contrast, couples in Groups B and C were in the majority of cases both working. In 22 cases, the woman's educational qualifications and her access to employment made it both possible and necessary for her to assume the role of 'breadwinner' while the couple lived outside Zimbabwe.

Table 4

OCCUPATION OF BOTH SPOUSES WHEN RELATIONSHIP BEGAN (N=50)

	<i>Group</i>					
	<i>A1</i>	<i>A2</i>	<i>A3</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>
Both studying at university	10	4	4	1	1	20
Man at university/ woman working	9	2	0	0	0	11
Man at university/ woman undergoing other training	6	2	2	0	0	10
Both working	2	0	2	1	3	8
Man working/woman not working or undergoing any training	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	27	8	8	3	4	50

Relative to the position of the spouses abroad, on returning to Zimbabwe, the employment prospects of Zimbabwean men were enhanced. Zimbabweans returning home were well educated and had found employment in relatively lucrative positions. In Zimbabwe, in marked contrast to the situation that existed when couples were abroad, all except one husband made a larger financial contribution to the conjugal home than their wives.

A career-orientated foreign wife faced two problems in the area of employment: a bias against women in senior posts, and foreign status. While section 23 (3) of the constitution prohibits discrimination in employment on the grounds of non-citizenship, senior government posts invariably go to Zimbabwean citizens. Job advertisements, particularly for

employment in parastatal organisations, specify citizenship as a criterion for appointment, while the government policy on Black advancement inevitably implies, and sometimes explicitly states, advancement of Zimbabwean citizens. For foreign spouses, general difficulties in obtaining promotion were related to citizenship, nationality and to a lesser extent, being female. The majority of foreign spouses who worked outside the home were in full-time employment, with 5 per cent of them employed in the traditional and relatively low paid female areas of teaching, nursing, sales and secretarial work.

In the case of four couples, there had been a complete reversal of the situation abroad, where the woman had been the only worker, to her status as full-time housewife, while the husband shifted from unemployment to full employment. Most changes were less dramatic, but their net result was a radical change in the balance of financial resources that each spouse brought into the household when the couple became resident in Zimbabwe. The change in question, as with employment opportunities, favoured the men.

The economic dependence of wives on their husbands confirmed for women their changed role within the conjugal unit. The decreased status which that implied was found to have implications for their marital relationship, most especially in the areas of marital decision-making and the power of spouses within the marriage.

The response of spouses to the changing resource situation varied. As the following two cases indicate, the response of foreign spouses was dependent on perceptions and expectations of both past and present situations. Mrs ZF4 said that after marrying her husband she 'dropped out' and did not finish her university studies. Her husband continued his education to post-graduate level. In the intervening period, as she noted:

It helped for me to be working as it enabled (her husband) to finish his studies. He was getting some money from part-time work and a small scholarship, but it wasn't enough for him or us, so the money I earned was what we lived on. His money was a supplement and we used it mostly for clothes, a social life and other bits and pieces.

Such temporary arrangements did not reflect a long-term approach to the situation. Women like Mrs ZF4 accepted their responsibilities as short-term in nature, as a mere preparation for, and investment in, the future. She noted explicitly, 'I was raised with the idea that a husband should provide and accepted that viewpoint.' At the time of the research, she was pleased that her husband had become a good provider.

For other women, their concept of their marriage in the future did not involve becoming totally financially dependent on their husbands. Any change envisaged generally centred on both spouses bringing an equal amount of money into the household. In practice, outside Zimbabwe,

women had frequently become familiar with the role of financial provider and of the benefits to themselves of such a position. When Mr and Mrs ZF12 first returned to Zimbabwe they lived in Bulawayo, moving to Harare four years later. During their stay in Bulawayo, Mrs ZF12 found,

I simply could not find work, as that town was quite small and limited in terms of jobs. Throughout that time, I felt very frustrated seeing my husband's career advancing while my own was not. When (his employer) posted him to Bulawayo, no consideration was given to my employability there . . . He could not understand how I felt, which simply created tension and stress between us.

At the time of research, Mrs ZF12 was working in Harare and said, 'Now I feel much happier than before.'

The Zimbabwean concept of marriage does not emphasise spousal companionship in areas such as joint leisure-time activities or joint household tasks. The time a husband spent with kin and his own network of friends, meant that couples interviewed spent far less time together, in Zimbabwe, than they had done abroad. Foreign wives found that their husbands were less willing to engage in household tasks jointly, as they had done in the past. Wives suggested that while couples were abroad, husbands (without the demands of kin) devoted more time to the marital relationship and the conjugal home.

Where cordial relations existed between the couple and the foreign spouse's family and friends, the relationship, and where relevant subsequent marriage, existed within the support situation provided by these people as part of the individual's and/or couple's social network. Coming to live in Zimbabwe removed the family and friends of the foreign spouse from the effective social network of the couple. For the Zimbabwean spouse, kin, family and friends became part of the individual's network.

The transition to their new environment also meant an exchange of different resources between spouses along with the access each spouse had to various resources. Conflict arose when the new exchange of resources was not acceptable to both spouses or when spouses in response to their new situation placed different values on resources. Such was the case when wives valued spousal companionship highly while their husbands valued kin and spousal companionship equally.

Access to and use of household resources

In the Zimbabwean environment, access to resources changed for husbands and wives. Within the Zimbabwean patrilineal extended family, and in relation to the conjugal household's resources of time and money, membership of a spouse's extended family and kin group meant that these resources were potentially open to, and at the disposal of, a large number of people. A Zimbabwean husband's role within his kin group meant

duties and responsibilities that incorporated kin as well as his wife and children.

Among Zimbabwean spouses, their high level of education gave them prestige and influence within their kin group. Their occupations and financial resources were part of the group's resources to which each member felt they had access and on which they could accordingly make demands. Thus on family matters, a good deal of confidence and trust was vested in the Zimbabwean spouse by his extended family. These men were also subject to a good deal of pressure to fulfil their duties and obligations (e.g. by being isolated by kin or by accusations of opposing custom and tradition). Mrs ZF29 noted that her husband refused at one stage to pay school fees for his younger brother when asked to do so by his father. Finally, instead of the school fees, he had to supply all other items, such as uniforms and books.

There had been a lot of family pressure brought to bear on him to do so, until he finally agreed. His family members were making him feel that he had really done something wrong by refusing their request.

Being an eldest son added to an individual's expected involvement in family matters. Finally, for Zimbabwean spouses there was frequently a feeling of moral obligation to help their families, who had had far fewer opportunities than themselves and who were poorer. Such moral obligations were even more important where another family member had fulfilled the individual's duties and responsibilities in his absence abroad. There were two interrelated areas in which a husband's kin made demands on the conjugal household's resources: financial and non-financial. Neither type of demand could be considered in isolation from the other, because they overlapped considerably. When a relative stayed with a couple for educational purposes, he or she was provided with accommodation, food, clothing plus school fees, all of which involved the use of the household's financial resources. Contributions of cash and kind were also made at funerals and other family events.

Decisions on resource allocation could no longer be made only by and with reference to the couple, but had to take the wider kin group and its rights into consideration. The kin group's authority structure could impose decisions on its members and ensure compliance through informal negative sanctions. Where decisions were not imposed by the group, they were made by the Zimbabwean spouse, with his foreign spouse frequently feeling for a number of reasons that she had little influence over these decisions, irrespective of whether material or non-material resources were involved. As the following cases illustrate, the feelings of foreign spouses on this matter varied and depended on a number of factors: the absolute and relative size of the financial demand; what the money was to be used

for; who the commitment was made to; and what the impact would be on the couple's household finances. Mrs ZF34 explained that her husband was the eldest in his family. While living abroad, they had sent money to Zimbabwe to educate the second boy. After their return home, she said, 'We had to educate all the others.' She did not know how they had survived financially, citing as an example having to buy four or five loaves of bread per day because so many family members were staying with them. She said that her husband's reaction to the demands of his family was simple, 'What can I do?' As the eldest son, she felt, he accepted the responsibility of taking care of the schooling of his younger brothers and sisters. 'There have been times', she said, 'when I felt I could not stand it any longer.' Mrs ZF34 gave the impression that she understood and accepted her husband's position, but found the situation depressing and difficult to cope with. She felt that neither of them had any real influence over their situation, it being determined for them by the position of the couple in relation to the man's extended family.

Mrs ZF14 was from another African country and felt that, though in her country 'one is expected to help family members, it is not demanded of you in the same way as in Zimbabwe'. She said her husband,

did not tell me, initially, that he was giving money for various things such as clothing etc. to members of his family. When I discovered this and confronted him, at first he denied it but later agreed that he was doing so. I felt very angry at not being told, in the first place, of his decision in this respect, considering that he had ignored me and the children.

Mrs ZF18 said that financially they looked after her mother-in-law. While her husband had been away, his brothers took care of their mother. Now she felt it was her husband's turn. As she said, 'coming from an African-American family where the extended family is still of importance, especially where there is a lot of poverty, I could understand and appreciate the need for this'.

Time spent with family members was viewed, by wives, as one reason for the couple no longer sharing household tasks or spending their free time together. Foreign spouses saw their husbands as devoting their time to the affairs of their extended family and themselves as unable to influence this situation. Family members were viewed as taking the resource of time away from the couple, which foreign spouses valued as part of their marital relationship. Husbands were felt to put too much spare time into such activities, as Mrs ZF4 explained. On the Saturday prior to one of my visits, her husband 'spent the entire day driving people from place to place in an effort to get a family function organised'. She saw this use of his time as very irritating: 'You feel like saying — for heavens sake, why are you giving all your attention to your family and not more to me?'

Following their residence in Zimbabwe, foreign spouses felt that the nature of decision-making within their homes had gradually changed, in a direction with which they were unhappy. Wives noted the change in conjugal decision-making, when they found themselves excluded by their husbands from various decisions, most notably those related to extended family issues, such as financial and other support for kin group members. In this respect, whether or not a woman had access to her own financial resources, the greatest degree of conflict arose when there was no joint decision-making on the use of resources outside the conjugal household especially in relation to extended family matters.

Changing patterns of decision-making

Oppong (1981, 115) aptly noted:

The process of decision-making in the home, how domestic tasks and resources should be allocated, is an admittedly complex sequence of events, taking place between spouses and between them and their kin, affines, colleagues and other significant sets of associates and reference groups, with and about whom they exchange goods, services and communications. It depends to a great extent upon the relative power position of the spouses and their respective aspirations.

Of the 38 couples who had spent a part of their married life outside Zimbabwe, 33 wives suggested that decisions made by the couple abroad were joint in nature. That is, they discussed an issue together and then, taking into account each other's views along with the constraints of their situation, made a decision acceptable to both. Foreign spouses suggested that some decisions could be swung in a particular direction depending on the resources contributed by a spouse to the conjugal home. Among the remaining five couples, two wives suggested that, while abroad, their husbands had been the decision-makers in their homes while another two noted that some decisions were made jointly by the couple and others separately by spouses. The final wife noted, 'we have always tended to make our own independent decisions'. The majority of foreign spouses suggested that the couples' decision-making process outside Zimbabwe was joint in nature, but influenced by temporary expediency which over-rode socialisation and future expectations.

For these couples in their 'new' environment two distinct, though not completely separate, categories of decisions existed. First, there were decisions specific to the conjugal household, such as the choice of medical facilities, which had been a feature of the earlier stage of their marriages. Second, there were decisions that involved the extended family or kin group, with which they did not have to contend in the earlier phase of their marriages.

From the wives' responses to questions on how various household decisions were made, it was possible to classify decision-making, using Oppong's categories of syncratic, autonomic, and husband-dominant or autocratic decision-making. 'Syncratic' referred to household decisions made jointly by both spouses; 'autonomic' to a situation where each spouse makes their own decisions without reference to the other; and 'autocratic' to the husband making all major household decisions. In addition, a fourth category of decision-making existed among the research couples, namely 'combined syncratic and autonomic'. The latter referred to a situation where some decisions were made jointly by spouses while other decisions were made by each spouse independently: for example, both spouses would decide together to buy a car, but a wife would decide on her own whether or not to take Zimbabwean citizenship.

As Table 5 shows, couples varied in their patterns of decision-making. Foreign wives married to Zimbabwean men (Groups A1, A2, and A3) emphasised how their husbands had assumed a dominant role in the decision-making process; the making of separate/independent decisions in response to their husbands' unwillingness to engage in joint decision-making with their wives; and the combined joint and separate decision-making among spouses especially where husbands made their own independent decisions on commitments to their extended families. Women pointed out that they were referring to what they themselves considered to be important or major decisions (what assistance, financial or otherwise, to offer extended family members, whether a husband should make inheritance provisions in the form of a will). Couples in Group B (Zimbabwean women married to foreign men) and Group C (inter-racial marriage with both spouses Zimbabwean) showed a greater tendency for both the syncratic and autonomic modes of decision-making in line with the emphasis on equality within the home stressed by these spouses. Foreign wives stressed that there had been a change in the way couples made decisions after settling in Zimbabwe. As Table 6 shows, the change was in the direction away from a joint decision-making process to decisions dominated by the husband (five); decisions made independently by individual spouses (five); or towards the combined joint and separate decision-making pattern (ten).

For those couples where the wives were Zimbabwean, none had any large financial or other demands from the woman's family. Where small demands did occur, their husbands seemed willing to entertain them.

All-Zimbabwean couples generally had a well-defined and mutually agreed approach to all family matters. Among this group, the conjugal unit appeared to be valued highly, not infrequently due to the fact that the inter-racial marriage in itself had attracted difficulties and problems from family members and others.

Table 5
TYPE OF DECISION-MAKING PROCESS (N=50)

<i>Decision-making</i>	<i>Group</i>					<i>Total</i> <i>N</i>
	<i>A1</i> <i>N</i>	<i>A2</i> <i>N</i>	<i>A3</i> <i>N</i>	<i>B</i> <i>N</i>	<i>C</i> <i>N</i>	
Syncratic	9	2	3	1	2	17
Autonomic	5	4	1	2	1	13
Combined syncratic and autonomic	7	2	3	0	1	13
Autocratic	6	0	1	0	0	7
Total	27	8	8	3	4	50

Table 6
CHANGES IN DECISION-MAKING PATTERNS* AFTER COUPLES CAME TO
ZIMBABWE (N=47)**

<i>Decision-making</i>	<i>Outside Zimbabwe</i> <i>N</i>	<i>In Zimbabwe</i> <i>N</i>
Syncratic	30	15
Autonomic	11	12
Combined syncratic and autonomic	4	13
Autocratic	2	7
Total	47	47

Direction of change:

Syncratic -> Autocratic (2)

Syncratic -> Autonomic (5)

Syncratic -> Combined syncratic and autonomic (9)

Autonomic -> Autocratic (2)

Autonomic -> Syncratic (1)

Autonomic -> Combined syncratic and autonomic (1)

Combined syncratic -> Autocratic and autonomic (1)

*** Three couples had not lived outside Zimbabwe*

For foreign wives, the result was a transition in which they lost influence and authority within the home, especially in the area of decision-making. Wives took the decision-making process as a reflection of one spouse's authority or power within the household. Greater authority for their husbands meant for wives a decrease in their own influence. When foreign wives said 'I no longer have any influence in so many things in this house',

they were referring to their own perceptions of their changed position in relation to being able to influence the course of events on any one household issue.

Foreign wives unfamiliar with their new environment did not have knowledge of the cultural channels available to Zimbabwean women to gain a measure of informal power both within their marriage and their husbands' kin groups. The realisation by foreign wives that the conjugal decision-making process had changed, was part of their perception of a general change in their husbands' behaviour. In a nutshell, in Zimbabwe their husbands seemed to have acquired more authority within the marriage. That this change had occurred and why was of concern to foreign wives, who saw it as the source of much conflict and tension within their marriage and as relegating them to a vulnerable and insecure position.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

While factors 'external' to the marriages in question here were in part instrumental in explaining marital transition and the areas of marital relationship subsequently affected, they did not explain the processes of transition or their specific outcome for different marital relationships. Such explanations could only be found by examining the ways in which individual spouses or couples reacted to and dealt with the process of marital transition.

These marriages now existed within a society where the normative order supported and legitimised a husband's authority. As foreign wives came to terms with their new environment, their response to their changed position was dependent on a complex set of issues: their past perception of marital roles; their perception of their own past influence and authority within the family; their willingness to accept and to incorporate aspects of the new normative order into their lives; and their aspirations not merely for their position within the marriage and family but for the continuance of the marriage itself.

How foreign wives felt about changes in conjugal roles initially depended on their own concept and view of the role of a husband and on how they perceived their own role as family 'breadwinner' abroad in the short-term and in the long-term. For these couples, while resident abroad, the choice as to who was the family breadwinner did not necessarily arise. Where such a choice was made, it was in relation to the husband foregoing an earned income for a particular period to gain further educational qualifications. Essentially, at that stage the spouse in a position to maintain the household did so. Such temporary arrangements did not in all cases reflect the long-term approach of spouses. Some women accepted their responsibilities as short-term in nature, as a preparation for and investment

in the future. For other women, their concept of their marriage in the future did not involve becoming totally financially dependent on their husbands. What changes were envisaged centred on both spouses bringing equal financial resources into the home. In relation to household financial resources then, women who emphasised long-term equal roles were more dissatisfied with their changed status in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, they were more conscious of the conflict and tension that could arise within their marriages as a result of their husbands' 'breadwinner role'.

Foreign spouses were concerned with changing decision-making patterns when the change implied a loss of influence on their part in household issues. But they made a distinction between their influence over nuclear family and extended family issues. When a change occurred in the content but not in the pattern of couples' decision-making, there was no perceived loss of influence on the part of wives, at least in relation to the household issues with which they were concerned. Change from a syncratic to a combined syncratic and autonomic pattern, was not perceived as a loss of influence on the part of wives, when the autonomic pattern referred only to a husband's decisions on extended family matters, where the couple had agreed that such decisions were his responsibility and where his decisions were not felt to interfere with the nuclear family. For such couples, a joint decision on who should make specific decisions was a central issue. Where wives had agreed to an autocratic decision-making pattern, they did not see this situation as entailing a loss of their influence as they had willingly transferred this authority to their husbands. Whether or not wives felt they had lost influence in the marriage, depended on the importance they attached to their participation in nuclear and extended family decisions. The priority given by a foreign spouse to influencing decisions on nuclear or extended family issues, in turn depended on her adaptation to the changed environment. Foreign wives who remained in the overseas marital model continued to emphasise their influence in nuclear family issues, while those who accepted aspects of the Zimbabwean model also emphasised their influence over issues arising from the link between the conjugal unit and the extended family.

A number of factors influenced how a foreign wife reacted to the allocation of conjugal household resources to a husband's kin group. First, where her husband was the 'breadwinner', the resources in question were her husband's earnings, which he felt obliged and/or wanted to share with kin. Second, foreign spouses had to various degrees, limited understanding of the customs and practices of the ethnic group to which their husbands belonged. None felt particularly confident in this respect and in response left the Zimbabwean spouse to deal with extended family matters. Third, many felt that they did not want to break up their marriages because of such issues, feeling that they had too much to lose.

The disadvantages experienced by foreign wives in relation to their diminished status within the conjugal unit were offset by their perceived standard of living in Zimbabwe, seen as a resource, which they were getting from their marriages. Though satisfaction with their standard of living did not completely alleviate their sense of frustration and the stress associated with problems of promotion at work, taxation and their incomes, or how the household financial resources were allocated, it did act as a compensatory factor in many cases. To an extent, foreign wives considered the nuclear family's social status in Zimbabwe as compensation for their changed individual status within their marriages. But this applied only when changes in the marital relationship involved a husband's continued commitment to her and/or a lack of jointness in the marital relationship and not when behavioural changes (e.g. wife beating) were involved.

For foreign spouses the change in the conjugal households' material standard of living as a result of moving to Zimbabwe was important. These couples lived in comfortable, spacious homes, while their lifestyle in terms of food, mode of dress, etc., reflected a 'European' style of living. These couples fitted Lloyd's (1966, 4) definition of the contemporary African elite 'as . . . those persons who are more western educated and wealthy to a high degree relative to the mass of the population'. Zimbabwean husbands were equally conscious of the importance attached by their spouses to the status of the conjugal household. Zimbabwean spouses were aware of their spouses' feelings in this respect, and saw their own ability to provide a lifestyle attractive to their wives as giving them greater power and control within the marriage. No foreign wife who had attempted to encourage her husband to change his behaviour back to what it had been abroad felt that she had been successful to any large extent. In response to their husbands' unwillingness to change their behaviour, wives manipulated situations to their own advantage and in line with their own normative preference for nuclear marital and family type relationships (e.g. ensuring that a husband paid all major bills, thus limiting his expenditure on his kin). Wives used their social networks, to discuss the changing nature of their conjugal units, and as a support structure in developing a host of different responses and coping strategies over time.

For Zimbabwean spouses, elite status also had to be reconciled with membership of wider kin groups. For Zimbabwean men, there was,

undoubtedly a conflict between the desire of the elite, on the one hand to furnish their own homes and to educate their own children, and on the other, their feeling of obligation towards near kin. But the latter are not desired, and many elite salary earners are giving a substantial portion of their salaries to their close relatives (Lloyd, 1966, 29).

For Zimbabwean husbands, meeting the demands of both kin and nuclear family members, not infrequently necessitated a continuously changing and delicate balancing in allocating resources.

Husbands with prior knowledge of their own society and with enhanced prestige and status accepted the transition more readily than their wives. In striving to fulfil both their kin group and nuclear family obligations, husbands' acceptance of the transition was neither uniform nor consistent over time. Some husbands reverted to the overseas marital model while others sought to ensure that financial and other demands from kin group members were reduced or at least controlled. Mrs ZF7 spoke of how they paid school fees for two years for her husband's youngest brother. This boy's lack of success at school, she said,

angered me as I felt that he had simply wasted our money. When it became known among family members that he was no longer at school, another younger brother and sister began to ask for school items, such as exercise books, etc. in frequent letters.

By the time of the research she said,

My husband no longer reads these letters and simply ignores the requests. But we always discuss these issues and I argue to my husband, yes, your family needs help, but what about us?

Conflict ensued when a wife or husband felt that their spouse was not fulfilling the role expected of that spouse in line with the preferred marital model. Harrell-Bond (1969, 85) asked, 'If there is conflict in the role expectations which are held by the partners, which will be the direction of the resolution or change?' For these couples conflict was avoided when both reverted to the overseas marital model or when wives accepted aspects of the Zimbabwean model. Changes in the resources which spouses put into the conjugal household had implications for the power of husbands and wives and for the process of marital decision-making. The manner in which these couples sought to deal with changes in their conjugal relationships were complex and involved negotiating around the degree to which their differential status was acceptable to each spouse. For these couples re-locating their marriages involved a process of transition and change to a new normative order with subsequent changes in spousal resources, spousal decision-making patterns and the structure of marital power. The outcome was a re-negotiation of their marital power relationships in order to avoid conflict in their marriages; and to differentiate clearly between the marital and family power structure.

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