PHI1923 Contextualization for Social Change

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1. Write a 5-page paper using the outline below. Review the Examples of Contextualization

provided in the PHI 923 Course Resources located in DIAL. Provide responses to the

following based on your selected cultural issue or phenomenon:

a. **Present Situation of Social Concern** – describe the situation requiring a contextualized Christian response to a cultural situation or phenomenon.

b. **Social Analysis**: (Family, Church, Society) – Using the Five Spheres of Life, develop a cultural analysis to comprehensively describe aspects of the situation or phenomenon.

c. **Theological/Moral Evaluation** – Identify Biblical areas or Kingdom principles relevant to the issue.

d. **Issues to Address** – Identify underlying/related issues that need to be addressed in the contextualization strategy.

e. **Spectrum of Critical Contextualization** (address only relevant ones)

i. Condemnation – includes issues condemned by Scripture (i.e., erroneous doctrine, idolatry, or syncretism)

ii. Correction of Erroneous Emphases – cultural beliefs/practices containing true insights but are diluted with wrong focus.

iii. Conversion of Themes – beliefs/practices with no significant negative influence but can be used to point to Christ.

iv. Commendation of Good Belief and/or Practices – beliefs/practices in culture that are completely consistent with Scripture but exist without religious warrant are to be commended.

f. **Strategy for Contextualized Communication** - develop a strategy by thinking

through all the practical considerations below.

i. Stakeholders - Identify the people or groups who have a stake in the phenomenon or issue.

ii. Venues of Communication - These could be written or spoken, could involve media, or social or organizational networks.

iii. Resources - Identify available and needed resources.

iv. Timelines - Begin to think through the timeline or logistical issues involved in implementing a contextualization strategy.

v. Obstacles to Anticipate - Anticipating obstacles can add practical aspects to a strategy that can help it to succeed.

2. Paper Guidelines:

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

 **Examining Woman's Work and Value in Society and Christianized “Othering”**

**Situation of Social Concern**

Women’s work and worth in society continues to be undervalued and invisible (Ximenes, Ximenes, Macedo, & Mendes, 2021). Women’s place in society has been ‘othered’ to that of men even within Christianity. Within feminist theology, women being powerless in the church is not totally accurate. However, there is evidence to support the subservient roles they continue to play. Traditionally and culturally, there have been church communities that have missed the mark. Still today there are some churches and denominations that do not allow women to hold leadership positions in the church and their role has been misaligned as only ‘helpers’ and carers as always supportive. The bible speaks of women’s roles as helpmeet, which is a virtuous role that ought to be accepted with humility. The support can be towards co-leadership or leadership given the calling and purpose. The imbalance that women carry with work, reflects socio-cultural factors such as gender role socialization, expression of societal norms and values that perpetuate gender inequality. This issue of gender inequality and women’s undervaluing has pervaded the home, church and society at large and requires a multifaceted interdisciplinary response but for this paper we will focus on Christianized othering and the response from the church.

**Social Analysis**

In analyzing the five spheres of life, the issues are encountered in the family, church and work. According to Mati (2022), “with the active involvement of women in the church (ministry) and home, there is a need to study God’s design for the relationship between men and women. In reaffirming the divine order of this relationship, discussing the biblical gendered roles has been one of the major contending issues” p. 1. This begins by challenging traditional understanding of male dominance and examining God’s plan for a complementary egalitarian relationship between man and woman in the home, work and the church. In the family, issues around gender inequality manifest in unequal division of household work (cooking, laundry, cleaning, care of children etc.) and mental load (Kengatharan, 2020). In paid work, there are challenges encountered around inequality in leadership, designation of tasks, pay inequity and other factors such as assuming women are part of a nuclear family and therefore have adequate financial support or not considering that women might be single parents and may need time off to care for children and others and/or assuming that men ought not to have time off for care and other duties because women automatically carry that role (Tong & Fernandes Botts, 2018). In the church, ministerial and leadership roles are often automatically assigned to men. Though this has changed in some denominations, the normative practice of dominated male leadership is still a practice that continues in traditional churches (Joynes, 2019). Culturally and socially, gender inequality operates in all spheres and though there have been some efforts to curtail the occurrence, there are still clear misunderstandings around conceptual and cultural practice factors.

**Theological/Moral Evaluation**

Theologically, men and women are the same based on imago dei or personhood of God and different based on the roles they perform in society and the church specifically (equal but different). Women are expressed as helpers from creation, given divine authority to assist man in completing God’s work (Genesis 2:18-20). Woman is “indispensable in God’s design for humanity” (Mati,2022, p.2). But importantly are not considered a lesser being, both man and woman given dominion over the animals and are “one in Christ” (Genesis 1:27; Galatians 3:28). Paul's teachings in Corinthians are often taken out of context and used for division among the sexes. In 1 Corinthians 11:8–12, the ontological nature of men and women’s relationship presents a context for understanding authority and submission (not subservience) in the church. The feminist theological thinking of modern day society is at odds with some normative practice in church (Marie 2014). The expressions in Corinthians have been taken out of context and used as subjugation and othering of women’s work and worth in society in general and church specifically. My own worldview is that men and women are complementary in their roles in society and can co-leader in various arenas of church, work and family life.

 “The actions and teachings of Christ raised the status of women to a level that had never before existed. Jesus defied the cultural norms by accepting and honoring women, as seen in the examples of His response to the Samaritan woman (John 4:5–29), His defense of Mary

in the Mary-Martha incident (Luke 10:38–42), His words to Martha(John 11:25–26), and His appearance to women after His resurrection (Matthew 28:10). The Apostolic Church went on to accept women in prominent leadership roles as seen in the examples of Apphia (Philemon 2), Nympha (Colossians 4:15), Priscilla (1 Corinthians 16:19), and Phoebe (Romans 16:1–2)" (Schimidt, 2004 p. 4). This influence of Christ's teachings and example have sought to revolutionize women's standing in society and their promotion to influence and leadership. This account of biblical influence is vastly underrepresented in the sociological discourse on women's empowerment.

**Issues to Address**

The gender inequality genesis predates history and can be traced along misogynistic and patriarchal history. Some scholars have said that gender inequality started in prehistoric and/or biblical times (Failinger, Schiltz, Stabile, & Albertson Fineman, 2013; Guitián & González, 2022). The fight for equality began in the 19th century with the fight for suffrage and other liberties. The biblical impact in the Old Testament aligns with the cultural trends of the time with women as property and in the New Testament, the narrative begins to change to inclusion and acceptance. In more contemporary times, the debate took shape and saw different efforts at gender equality through policy and legislative development. Traditionally, society has considered women as second class in relation to men. In some cultures, discrimination was in relation to restricted freedom of movement, restricted interactions with men, restricted liberties such as owning land and driving and some killed as children as they were considered of little or no value to society or their families and many other atrocities. Contextually, this challenge around gender inequality and othering of women is deeply rooted in traditional cultural practices perpetuated by gender roles, norms and gender socialization from childhood through biblical reference and secular hunter gatherer societies. These norms have continued through the means of socialization through the family, school, church, paid work and other avenues in society. Laws and policies have been implemented and some require updating while yet there are many to be developed and monitored. Culturally, the UN decade of women (1976-1985) was a pivotal point for modern legislation for women’s rights across the world. This period culminated in conferences that sought to address inequalities across regions of the world with women representing the territories and areas that women operated in or were kept out of. In Jamaica, the Bureau of Gender Affairs (formerly Bureau of Women’s Affairs) is a key government department that seeks to address women’s presence, influence and leadership in various spaces.

**Spectrum of Critical Contextualization**

In the spectrum of critical contextualization, condemnation of gender inequality is addressed in the scriptures. In creation, the roles of both men and women were clear, to occupy, work the land and have dominion over the earth and to be help-meet to man respectively. The Fall has caused some confusion of roles, responsibilities and purpose and has fueled gender inequality and imbalance perpetuated through historical materialism often explained through Marxist ideologies of work, conflict and power. Imago Dei as expressed in Genesis 1:27, is a clear expression of equality of the sexes, made in the likeness of God and condemnation of any other expression of othering.

The cultural practice and nuance of division of labour and responsibilities reflects complementarity which is a correct perspective for the relationship of men and women. However, patriarchal societies and male dominance has reflected a wrong focus that has led to othering, belittling and undervaluing of women’s work and value in society. This is an area for correction of erroneous emphasis.

 **Strategy for Contextualized Communication**

In developing a strategy for contextualized communication and action for change there are a few aspects for planning to consider:

*Stakeholders*-there are a number of persons/groups with a stake in this issue of gender inequality namely women, families, churches, other organizations and governments.

*Venues of communication*- Education around the issue will be communicated in the form of a booklet or manual. A social media page and group will be created for sensitization and social change. Mainstream media (television and radio) will be used to drive traffic to social media. A seminar will also be used to reach the church community.

*Resources*- The resources that will be used are television, radio, the internet, human resources (myself and other content experts) to bring voice to the issue and present opportunities for change.

*Timelines*- This strategy will be developed and implemented over a year. Six months to develop the manual/booklet and have it reviewed and printed. In months 7-8, I will create a social media page and create a group and distribute booklets at churches, offices and at other social events. Then month 9-10 do appearances on television, radio and other events at churches, parks, at offices to encourage people to visit the social media page and join the advocacy group. Months 11-12, I will continue to monitor the project, evaluate the progress based on goals and target set for success.

*Obstacles to Anticipate*- There are some limitations and obstacles to achieving success in the project that will be considered. Firstly, if people are not adequately and consistently engaged in social media then people could begin to leave the page. Therefore in anticipation of the obstacle, videos will be created and circulated at various points and webinars to be streamed on the page to keep the community engaged. Secondly, if some persons are not amenable to social media then engagement will have to continue through the manual/booklet and/or engagement at physical events at churches and other social events.

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