

REPRESENTING LOBOLA:

Exploring discourses of contemporary intersections of masculinity for Zimbabwean men in Cape Town: *lobola*, religion, and normativity

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

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Abstract

“As the traveller who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own” (Mead; 1928).

The following study is an exploration of religious Zimbabwean migrant men’s representations of *lobola*. The study was undertaken to strengthen conversations about hegemonic masculinity which often marginalize both the role of religion in shaping masculinities and simultaneously may homogenize the notion of ‘cultural tradition’. The research uses qualitative methods which seek to uncover the way in which Zimbabwean men who identify as Christian negotiate aspects of masculinity in relation to their lived experience of undertaking marriage through *lobola*. My main methodological aim was to allow participants to represent their own experiences, as these engage with both changing economic circumstances and Pentecostal Christianity. In order to analyse the empirical data I employ a theoretical framework which explores contextual and relational understandings of masculinity, religion and marriage. The dominant themes discussed include discourses on normativities; economic migration; religiosity and marriage which are used to further understand narratives of Zimbabwean men’s lived experience of *lobola*. I argue that the negotiation of these intersectional aspects creates zones of tension which Zimbabwean men must negotiate with on an ongoing basis.

The study argues that the past two decades of economic and political stress, coupled with a plethora of changing 'norms' about the meaning of heterosexuality, marriage, and partnership, mean that daily performativities of Christian-identified masculinity are both strongly embedded in fixed notions of gender normativity and simultaneously seek to accommodate changing circumstances.

Key words: Masculinity, Heterosexuality; *Lobola*; Christianity; Culture

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Representing lobola: Exploring discourses of contemporary intersections of masculinity for Zimbabwean men in Cape Town: *lobola*, religion, and normativity is a product of both my personal and political experience. In 2012 I undertook research on the meaning and process of marriage and *lobola* for women in contemporary Zimbabwe and engaged with debates about how these shaped identities of my participants. I explored theories on the clash between cultural values, national laws and international human rights standards which affect the way in which *lobola* has evolved in contemporary Zimbabwean society. Through this research process I began question to whether and to what extent men's voices have been added to the debate and how an exploration of men's experiences might richly contribute to a better understanding of the process of marriage, *lobola* and gender performativities. Upon engaging in informal discussions with young Zimbabwean men who found themselves confronted with social pressures to 'perform' both during and after the process of marriage and *lobola*, my research interests began to develop further. Whilst developing questions on what it meant to be a marrying 'Shona man' in the 21st century, discourses on religion, cultural obligations, economic pressures, gender normativity, 'ideal masculinity' and social belonging began to emerge. In exploratory literature searches, while it was clear that much material on masculinities and social change in Southern Africa is available, almost no researcher takes the impact of religious affiliation on the meaning of masculinities seriously. In addition, while the literature encompassed research on the impact of forced migrancy, especially for Zimbabweans between 2000 and 2015, such research was also uninterested in the fact that affiliation to a religious faith (and participation in religious communities) is widespread among Zimbabweans, whether they live 'at home' or as immigrants in South Africa. I therefore focused my interest on an exploration of Christian men's representations of their understandings of *lobola* and their experiences of its processes as they intertwine with their religious and economic lives as migrants. It is primarily a study which extends theories on masculinities in African contexts.

According to Zimbabwean tradition, *lobola* is a significant cultural process in which the groom and his clan pay respect to the bride's family by presenting gifts that were normally in the form of livestock and beads. As argued by authors such as Jeater (1993) and Mupotsa (2014), *lobola* is a significant

cultural practice of marriage which serves both material and symbolic purpose through the distribution of material wealth as well as symbolising adulthood, marriage, transfer of power and family unity (Jeater; 1993). The significance of lobola further includes “the distribution of productive and reproductive resources, including the transfer of rights, particularly of a woman’s procreative capacities, from her natal family to the groom’s family; the sustenance of measures of social control between generations and genders; and finally that it serves as a means for people to claim a cultural identity,” (Mupotsa; 2014).

Over time, the payment of *lobola* has shifted from livestock and beads, to cash payments which are reflective of modernity and the current economic state of Zimbabwe (Nilsson; 2004). The recent commodification of the practice has led to social tensions and as a result critics argue that *lobola* has become an “element of the capitalist system that works to benefit men and that socially, politically and economically alienates women” (Mupotsa; 2014; 223). In the following research I explore the interconnectivity between *lobola* and aspects of social influences, economic pressures and the need for men to adhere to ideal masculinities perpetuated by both culture and religion. Although there has been a vast amount of literature discussing the effects of *lobola* on women’s identities and women’s rights, I argue that there is limited research on the effects of *lobola* on masculinity especially in relation to economic migration and religion. I am especially interested in what I argue are under-researched forms of masculinities with a particular focus on religiosity and what it means to be a man in African men’s lives. As a researcher however I argue that the generic use of the term ‘African’ is problematic in that it incorrectly homogenizes the individual experiences of all men who identify as ‘African’. I specifically focus on how Zimbabwean men who have migrated to South Africa represent their masculinity with reference to religion, marriage and social influences in the 21st century.

Although there is a vast amount of research on ‘African’ masculinity in terms of power, marriage economic migration in Southern Africa, I argue that much of this literature highlights discussions around patriarchy, violence and gender power struggles in which men are portrayed as the dominant gender both physically and financially (Kimmel; 2003; 148). Furthermore research on ‘African’ masculinities tends to homogenize the experiences of African men creating what I argue is a broad and non-specific view on the different types of ‘African’ masculinities. These include portraying all men in relation toughness, violence, risky sexual behavior and HIV for example. I aspire that the

following research will contribute to the deficient literature on how these aspects overlap and intersect to create different experiences for Zimbabwean men who negotiate lived experiences of marriage and *lobola* whilst attempting to still uphold both their Christian and cultural identity.

Through my research, I argue that the stages of *lobola* and marriage are characterised by tensions for many men, as they attempt to negotiate their gender identity and positionality within contemporary spaces of family, responsibility and marriage. Theorists who accept the notion of an influential and hegemonic masculinity argue that adherence to the norms of its ideals are one causal factor for the legitimization of the subordination of 'other' kinds of masculinity which were seen to be less dominant in society (Ratele; 2008). Despite the significance of marriage, the cultural practice of *lobola* has been affected by many changes in the 21st century including migration, economic and political instability and the rise of feminist debates which criticise the process of *lobola*. As argued by Mupotsa, "the controversy of maligning the ritual's role in "tradition", or "religion", brings the tensions of what social change means to a head. For those inclined towards a humanist Marxist perspective, the ritual might be perceived as "losing" its intended meaning and perhaps even some imagined sense of "authenticity", due to the corruption of capital" (Mupotsa; 2014). As part of my research I explore migrant Zimbabwean men's representations of their choice to uphold marriage both from 'traditional' and 'religious' perspectives and remain alert to their engagement with contextual socio-economic pressures.

Zimbabwe: Political and economic shifts seen in the past 15 years and the impact on migrancy

After a long armed struggle that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans, independence was won in 1980 and quickly gave rise to the growth of a nation both economically and politically. "The national economy grew at about 4% per annum and welfare policies to expand access to health, education and housing were developed, resulting in the opening up of the public service and to a lesser extent, the private sector, to blacks, particularly men" (Gaidzanwa; 2014). This was unfortunately short-lived as the late 1990's saw the beginning of political and economic instability resulting in widespread drought, national debt and the rise of unemployment and increased in poverty.

The need for better security both economic and political led to an increase a large number of professionally trained Zimbabweans emigrating to South Africa, USA and the UK. Although many Zimbabweans emigrated in order to earn an income and provide better opportunities for themselves and their families, this also led to the demise of the social and family structure. The significant impact on shifting gender roles and the breakdown of the family structure resulted in “non-migrant women in transnational split families assumed either the sole or primary responsibility of breadwinning and moral guiding—roles that are conventionally performed by men—over and above the traditional primary caring role of raising children” (Chereni; 2015). As a result this has shifted ideas on gender normativity both for the women who remain behind and assumed the role of both mother and father as well as for the men who migrated without their wives thus working and managing their domestic duties such as cooking and washing (Chereni; 2015)

Research presented by Chereni (2015) and Hungwe (2014) on migrancy of Zimbabweans to countries such as South Africa and the UK provide a foreground to the centrality on literature which explores gender and migrancy. Both provide an in-depth insight into the impact of migrancy on gender roles, shifts in social and family expectations and the impact of economic tensions as well as pressures experienced by migrants “hindered by the activities of the host population (e.g. xenophobic attitudes among South African locals), in some cases” (Hungwe; 2014). Hungwe discusses how both migrant men and women from Zimbabwe use social networks such as the church to access jobs, houses and marriage partners which is instrumental in developing research on the significance of the church for migrants and how this shapes daily lived experience. She argues that “the church functions (a) as an institutional conveyor of ethno-cultural bridging; (b) as a medium of socio-cultural integration; (c) a medium of affirming original culture; (d) a celebration of cultural and religious syncretism and (e) as an engine of non-adaptation. Using these categories, religion among Zimbabwean migrants can be evaluated as fulfilling function (c) – that is, affirming original culture” (Hungwe; 2014). On the other hand Chereni’s research develops an important insight into the lives of migrant Zimbabwean men and argues that “transnational migration at once presents opportunities for and obstacles to the reconstitution of gender-normative forms of parental involvement in migrant families” (Chereni; 2015). The two authors are examples of the many that explore migrancy of

Zimbabwean men and contribute considerable literature to the impact on gender normativity as well as the economic, political and social pressure faced by the migrants and their families.

Whereas considerable literature exists on the centrality of thinking about gender and migrancy, I argue that the existing literature does not sufficiently demonstrate how the experience of cross-border economic migration might shape migrant men's performativity of masculinity, especially in relation to religion, tradition and marriage.

Research objectives

Representing lobola: Exploring discourses of contemporary intersections of masculinity for Zimbabwean men in Cape Town: *lobola*, religion, and normativity seeks to complement existing work on critical studies of masculinity, marriage, religion and African cultural practices through addressing the relationships between them. My hope is that my research will develop further debates within the field of study on masculinity studies, family building and marriage in an African context. This research not only represents a unique contribution to the country specific literature on masculinity, *lobola* and marriage but is further concerned with how social, cultural and religious influences have continued to shape African masculinities and how these are then related to the understanding of African masculinities and what it means to be a man in modern society. Although I do agree with the argument that “if men are brought up, as they continue to be in so many parts of the world, to take on the role of primary breadwinner for their wives, children and other dependents, the process of adjusting to women’s growing capacity to earn must surely be a difficult” (Kabeer; 2007).

Dissertation layout

In order to enhance my research and extensively explore men’s lived experiences with regards to the subject; I had to employ methodological tools that provided me the flexibility needed to gather data on such a broad subject. The first chapter of this dissertation is dedicated to introducing the topic of representing lobola, outlining my primary focus which is on researching religious men’s representations of their understandings and experiences of lobola how these intersect with their religious and economic lives as migrants. Chapter two elaborates existing literature on masculinities by key theorists. Here I discuss discourses on hegemonic masculinities, masculinities in sub-Saharan Africa (in relation to power, violence, migration and heteronormativity), as well as other less explored

masculinities such as gay masculinities and religious men. It also presents a literary outline on marriage, ritual and lobola which are seen as central to manhood and masculinity especially in an African context. Chapter three of the dissertation discusses the methodological framework used to explore and answer my research question. It provides a methodological outline which discusses my process of research; this includes discussing the connections between my research practice and theories of knowledge; outlining the data collection techniques; the transcription process; limitations experienced in my research as well as the ethical considerations taken into account to maintain the integrity of my research. In chapter four I employ a thematic analytical tool to present the findings and data drawn from the interview transcripts. In the first analytic section I analyse and engage with participants discourses on masculinity and representations of gender normativities. Here I highlight and discuss complexities of participant's engagement with sustaining masculinity, especially on the basis of their negotiations of normative notions of men and women's relationships and their economic migrancy which influences how they negotiate ideas about 'being a man.' The subthemes include locating gender in language and the meaning of 'strength' as it is referred to and represented by my participants. The section will further explore sub-themes of bodies and space as well as narratives of economic migration which vastly impact how one embodies gender normative practices.

In my second analytic section, I further develop my participant's representations of masculinity by exploring discourses on religiosity, marriage and marriagability as central to their ideas on normative masculinity. Here I explore my participant's engagement with and experiences with the process of *lobola* which is the crux of my research interest. I argue that *lobola* is a central but complex practice in the representation of marriage in Shona culture. I explore how and why tensions may arise from negotiation aspects of participants' Christian beliefs, as well as from their daily negotiation of changing socio-economic environments as migrants. To summarise I engage once again with *lobola* as a way to explore these zones of tension which arise as participants negotiate their Christian, heteronormative masculinity. The concluding chapter discusses the findings from chapter four in detail, highlighting my main argument as well as identifying new paths for future research on the topic.

Conclusion

De Mel et.al argues that “economic pressures resulting from inadequate income, lack of economic assets and financial responsibilities as breadwinners and male heads of households were found to be amongst the primary causes of male stress and lack of well-being” (De Mel et.al; 2013; 5). I argue that this perspective needs to be strengthened through attention to questions of gender normativities and “being a man” in relation to religious affiliation (Pentecostal Christianity, for this research) and the importance of cultural practice. Although much research on African masculinities argues that a zone of tension exists for men who attempt to negotiate with and uphold both tradition and religion (Setsiba; 2008), I remain unconvinced and instead argue that the major zone of tension for my Zimbabwean participants stems from economic pressures to perform and uphold gender normativities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of my literature review chapter is to review research critical to the creation of my own theoretical framework and to the design of my own research focus. It is important to note that I after careful review, I consider it important to discuss broad research on masculinity as well as literature directly related to my research. Although this makes for a lengthy discussion of literature, I found this was crucial in developing rich data for my research focus and key theories for debate. In the following chapter I discuss fundamental arguments on masculinity presented by key theorists such as Connell, Ritzer, Messerschmidt and Morell, to name a few. I begin by exploring how these theorists discuss different representations of masculinity arguing that the notion of one ideal 'hegemonic masculinity' is not only complex but problematic. As I am researching masculinities in Zimbabwe, I further develop my literature review by engaging with work by Ratele and Pattman who have continued to contribute a vast amount of literature which develops a more contextual understanding of masculinities in Sub-Saharan Africa. This research explores the common traits attached to masculinity including power, violence, economic independence, HIV and heterosexuality which are largely emphasised in African contexts. Here I engage with the dominant theme of 'Performing Masculinity' which discusses how men negotiate in spaces of religion and culture. I engage with contemporary thematization of masculinity and debates in African masculinities research, both of which I argue are central to the development of my research focus. The subthemes emanating from this include literature on masculinity in relation to power, violence, heterosexuality, colonial and post-colonialism and migrant men. A second dominant theme is that of 'masculinity and intersectionality' in which I discuss how men negotiate aspects of *lobola*, religion and lived experiences in the 21st century- all of which are central to my exploration of *lobola* in contemporary Zimbabwe. I further explore topics on masculinity relationships to ancestry and urban life, homosexuality and religion, which I argue are especially underexplored on an African context. The prime research I shall employ is developed by Pattman who engages with discourses on African masculinities religion and Baker and Ricardo who discuss notions of African masculinities and culture. Similar to my concluding argument, Baker and Ricardo state that "there is no typical young man in sub-Saharan Africa and no single African version of manhood," as these ideas about masculinity are constantly changing (Baker, Ricardo; 2005). In order to develop

richer data I conclude by discussing material on questions of marriage, and on lobola and ritual which are significant to ideas about manhood especially in relation to Sub-Saharan masculinities

Contemporary theorization of masculinities

“Masculinity represents not a certain type of man but rather a way that men position themselves through discursive practise” (Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 841)

The question “what is masculinity” has attracted wide arguments amongst researchers. On one hand, the hypothesis is that masculinity is a socially constructed ‘gender identity’ and on the other it is argued that masculinity is solely reliant on one’s biological construction (Morell; 2007; 21). Authors such as Morrell (2007) argue that this gender identity cannot exist without the ‘other,’ being femininity, which affects and shapes what masculinity is or how it is ‘performed’ in society. Morrell also argues that masculinity is a ‘gender identity’ that changes over time, mainly in response to various influences in society such as changes in the economy, cultural or social beliefs which contribute to being gendered. This chapter highlights different arguments around the meaning of masculinity and further explores the significance of research which I have thematised as follows: hegemonic masculinity; the notion of complex African masculinities; theorization of masculinities and violence, and research which links the study of masculinity to heterosexuality.

The concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity is one that has interested authors for many different reasons. Hegemonic masculinity can be understood as patterns of practices that not only distinguish different ‘forms’ of masculinity but also allow men’s dominance over women (Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 832). Authors such as Connell & Messerschmidt are particularly interested in the concept of hegemonic masculinity and how it has offered researchers the platform to critically analyse research on criminology or media for example. The authors posit a relationship between hegemonic masculinity and socio-political power; they argue that it can be seen as the most “honoured way of being a man, it requires all men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimates the global subordination of women” (Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 832). In their research, Connell and Messerschmidt also conclude that masculinity is “neither stagnant nor collinear”, despite the constancy of a hegemonic masculinity’s complicity in gendered power over women. Additionally, they

argue that this hegemonic masculine identity is almost 'fictional' or unattainable by most men, mainly because this version of masculine identity may be one that is susceptible to socio-political change and constantly interrupted and shaped by social, political and economic influences.

Collier and Messerschmidt also introduce us to the idea of "other masculinities" which have a significant influence on the way men negotiate their positionality and masculinity on a daily basis. Connell (2005) refers to these as being involved in "the social struggle of subordinate masculinities which are influenced by dominant forms," highlighting how different masculinities shape each other to create different identities (Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 835).

I would argue that the study of masculinity is integral to gender studies as research has over the past two decades influenced theories of gender and social hierarchy. Collier and Messerschmidt use this lens to review 'patterns' of masculinity portrayed in the media and in the study of criminology for example. In both areas, a hegemonic masculine identity is linked to images of violence and war. Although there is a common hegemonic image of masculinity portrayed in the media, Connell and Messerschmidt argue that the idea of a hegemonic masculinity is more of a pattern of practise and not necessarily a set identity or expectation. Instead this 'hegemonic masculinity' is seen more as the 'desired' masculine identity, one in which boys or men either aspire to as well as collide with regularly (Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 832).

Primarily, the hegemonic masculine image tends to collapse all men identified subjects into engagement with the one dominant form of masculinity (Ratele; 2008; 520). Similarly, Kenneth Clatterbaugh argues that the concept of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity "carries a lot of historical baggage, which unless great care is exercised in their use, leads to confusion and careless thinking" (Clatterbaugh; 1998: 25). The idea of a hegemonic masculinity also fails to address that masculinity can be enacted by "people with female bodies" (Halberstam; 1998; Messerschmidt 2004). Halberstam points out that 'masculinity' is not fixed in a specific human body, mainly because masculine identities are developed through social interactions and can differ in particular gender social settings (Halberstam; 1998, Messerschmidt; 2004). Seeing that gender is created, shifted and changed through different social settings such as neighbourhoods, schools or peer group culture, it can be argued that as children grow, they interact as well as contest with hegemonic patterns of

masculinity. Similarly, men continue to shift their masculine identity depending on the social influences and changes (Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 835).

Debates in African masculinities research

Despite the value of the use of the concept of hegemonic masculine identity, it is not without its shortcomings. To authors such as Ratele, Baker and Ricardo (2005) the concept of hegemonic masculinity is one that remains flawed. They argue that masculinities are fluid and complex, and that no single discernible 'hegemonic' masculinity has certain permanent stability in any one context. Although Ratele focuses on African masculinities, he does agree that "the dominant ideals of masculinity, across racial groups, are predicated on a striking gender hierarchy, with demonstrations of toughness, bravery, and defence of honour" (Ratele; 2009; 1015). On the other hand Ratele refutes the idea of a totalizing hegemonic masculinity and instead highlights the significance of taking intersectionality seriously when researching the concept of masculinity. In the following excerpt I further explore research on African masculinities with a particular focus on Ratele who rejects the notation of hegemonic masculinity and instead places a focus on masculinities generated from within African contexts, where the term 'African' is broadly used as a continental descriptor. To support this, I include discussions by other masculinities researchers that are central in 'African masculinities' research.

Contrary to Connell and Messerschmidt who do draw on class analysis when studying masculinity, Ratele researches masculinity primarily in relation to race, particularly in relation to 'black masculinities' and the importance of using race as a theme to separate and understand diverse masculine identities which continuously change through men's interaction with one another (Ratele; 2008; 517). Ratele also highlights culture and history as major themes that are significant to shaping 'black masculinities' in an African context, which create differing masculinities on a continental level (Ratele; 2008; 517). For example he discusses the concept of 'ritualization' which is central to shaping 'African' masculinities. He argues that in some African 'cultures' manhood is achieved through reaching a certain age, and this is crucial to the formation of one's gender and hierarchy in these African societies (Ratele; 2008; 524). These cultural rites of passage place the man at a higher level

socially and others are required to now relate to him as a 'man' and not a 'boy' (Ratele; 2008; 524). He cites authors such as Dobson (2002) who argue that if children become gendered through patriarchal cultural biases in society, they are likely to perpetuate these stereotypes in society. Similarly, Murunga (2009) engages with discourses on masculinity and gender based violence which he indicates are due to the normalization of men's suffering in war and conflict and the portrayal of men as perpetrators of violence. These ideas lead to the arguments of a locally powerful 'hegemonic masculinity,' one which does not despise violence and one which may be aspirational in a particular (Bennett; 2010; 98).

Murunga's gender-focused publications have extensively engaged with research on masculinities on an African context highlighting its significance to being "part and parcel of activist and theoretical feminist work" (Bennett; 2010; 93). With a particular interest in men and their role in the struggles for gender equity in Kenya, he argues that the study of men and masculinities is still a very recent subject which will need further development. In one of his studies on gender and 'insecurities' in Africa, Murunga focuses on how "men" and "masculinities" questions have been framed by the feminist movements in Kenya and how this framing has impacted emerging groups and organizations whose objective is to address the men and masculinities question" (Bennett; 2010; 94). What is core about his research is the recognition of different masculinities and how different groups of men form opinions about feminist movements therefore altering gender relations in society and subsequently impacting women's rights. Similar to the arguments by Baker and Ratele, Murunga's research highlights masculinities as being fluid and changing. Murunga argues that flawed or hegemonic masculinity has been used to argue that all men benefit from patriarchy by the mere fact of being a man, but that these benefits are not enjoyed equally by all men. To develop his research interest on masculinities further, Murunga therefore questions how this argument can "develop a nuanced conceptual way of rethinking masculinities, conflicts and gender-based violence" (Bennett; 2010; 99).

Similarly Morrell argues that "it is critical for gender scholars to explore new theoretical and empirical work masculinity/masculinities into the field of gender studies in South Africa as it has both extended and strengthened the analytical capacity of gender work and has contributed practically to the work of promoting gender equity" (Morrell; 2007; 15). Morell argues that as a result of institutionalized

privileges, differences and inequalities exist amongst men causing men to politically locate themselves into groups (Morell; 2007; 17). In his previous research on masculinity and violence in Southern Africa, Morrell also argues that the aspect of violent masculinities was not a “natural state” of gender relations but a result of colonialism and apartheid which had a significant effect on African masculinities. He notes that although much research on violent masculinities in Africa has indicated that much of the violence is perpetuated by ‘black men’, this may be as a result of demographic observation and as such “violence is not caused by skin colour but rather by various historical, social and psychological factors” (Morell; 2007; 18).

Fuh (2009) also presents insightful research on masculinities in Cameroon with a particular focus on how young men attempt to profess their masculinity in the midst of difficult circumstances and how they express their masculinity amongst peers. As highlighted by other authors on masculinities, the struggle to perform and perpetuate characteristics of the ideal hegemonic masculine identity creates a crisis zone for most men. Fuh explores how these men negotiate with resources and space in order to express their masculinities and be made visible (Fuh; 2009). Similar to the argument presented by Murunga, Fuh’s exploration highlights the idea that the existence of patriarchy in society as beneficial to all men equally is a flawed concept causing many young men to feel “undervalued by the loss of old predictabilities and, overburdened by underachievement and the burden to proof masculinity” (Fuh, 2009). Fuh argues that this unequal access and distribution of social power amongst men is a reason for the creation of multiple versions of masculinity as men have to create spaces to play, negotiate and enhance their masculinities (Fuh; 2009). This creates a burden on men to enhance certain performative acts in order to gain the approval of their male counterparts, especially due to culturally constructed ideas of ‘real masculinity’ in an African context. Pattman and Epprecht’s research below shall be linked to this argument. For Pattman and Epprecht, the social, cultural and religious pressure on men to perform certain masculine traits and be accepted by peers is as a result of ideal masculinity being linked to heterosexuality in many African contexts. As my research explores how men negotiate between political, socio-economic, religious and cultural spaces, research by Fuh is central to supporting my hypothesis. Fuh argues that “the combo of the ‘crisis’ in masculinities, economic, political, religious and social crisis in Cameroon has created more intense competition for attention amongst young men in Bamenda,” which I position is true in many African contexts (Fuh;

2009). Similar to Ratele's discussion on the transition from boyhood into manhood as being crucial in creating masculinities, Fuh argues that the transition into manhood which places an obligation on men to achieve success (especially financially) in order to be endorsed as 'real men' is becoming increasingly difficult in African contexts plagued by political and economic downfall (Fuh, 2009). He therefore argues that performativity and 'doing masculinity' is a representation of an artificial self and a mechanism for men to cope with social pressures in which they feel undervalued when they are unable to live up to these expectations.

Mills and Ssewakiryanga's (2005) research on masculinities in Uganda similarly discuss discourses on shaping masculinities in relation to finances and their impact on men's ability to engage in intimate relationships and on issues concerning HIV transmission. Their study explores whether the crisis faced by men due to economic impotence, especially in an African context has provoked a rise in gender-based violence (Mills, Ssewakiryanga; 2005). The research suggests that the inability to provide for their girlfriends poses a threat in which other men may tempt their girlfriends with commodities beyond their financial reach causes some men to feel emasculated and disempowered thus seeking to establish their authority through acts of violence against women. Bhana and Pattman's (2011) research poses a similar argument where they state that for their 16-17 year old research participants, "girls' ideals of love are tied to their aspirations towards middle-class consumerism. Love becomes inseparable from the idealisation of men who provide" (Bhana, Pattman; 2011). Mills and Ssewakiryanga highlight a common but significant threat in literature on gender in Africa which discusses links between the colonial creation of the man as the breadwinner and the failure to redistribute resources during independence which has subsequently affected many African men's access to resources and to spaces used to achieve financial independence.

To develop a contextual study on masculinities in Africa, I find it important to contribute to the work of researchers such as Murunga, Morrell, Mills, Ssewakiryanga, and Fuh. Their contextual research is particularly important in the exploration of African masculinity as their themes of the impact of economic instability, the connection between waged opportunity and mobility (often forced), the impact of conflict and the meaning of race and racism link these very different researchers to broad theoretical concerns on the shape and processes of masculinities. Each researcher complicates the

theory of hegemonic masculinity by including different 'variables' which are argued to influence men's negotiation of what is demanded by gender normativities of masculinity. This deepens a theoretical analysis by moving away from a debate which juxtaposes interest in hegemonies against notions of endless possible flux and fluidity, by specific concentration on particular influences. In the next section of this review, I focus more on this point as it is central to the framing of my own research.

Researching difference within masculinities theory: marginal interests

In the study of masculinities, many authors have provided insightful research that has contributed to a broader as well as a contextual understanding of masculinity in the field of gender studies. In the following section I discuss different studies on masculinity, all of which are important to masculinities and whose interests have been sometimes marginalized in dominant debates. I firstly highlight African contextual research on masculinity which has discussed 'violent men,' 'men as heterosexual' (beyond research engaged with questions of HIV transmission) and 'migrant men and colonial impacts on masculinity'. Subsequently I raise questions about other routes to understanding masculinities largely unexplored within continentally-focussed study, including interests in masculinity and religion, counter-heteronormativity, and the influences on men who live in multiple relationships to ancestry and urban life. My motivation here is to show that research in each of these areas does offer interesting perspectives, but that the question of Christian influences over masculinity is under-included in intersectional theorizations of fluid masculinities. My own research seeks to address these gaps.

Masculinity, power and violence

"Challenges to hegemony are common, and so are adjustments in the face of these challenges"
(Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 835)

Although many researchers concur that masculinities are fluid and changing, the dominance of an association between masculinity and violence can be traced. Ratele states that 'masculine' identity is often conflated with a violent "trunk-sized, deep voice; gun in hand set of unchanging behaviours" (Ratele; 2008; 521). Furthermore, Ratele highlights other common characteristics attached to the

image of masculinity which include “money and power, leadership in public, intellectual superiority and hardiness to name a few” (Ratele; 2008; 33).

Over time, consensus on appropriate context-specific masculinities has been challenged. Connell and Messerschmidt also highlight how feminism has come to influence and shape masculinity in society, in relation to their interaction with women. Women of colour such as Maxine Baca Zinn (1982) and Angela Davis (1983) “challenged issues of power being conceptualized solely in terms of race thus laying the groundwork for questioning any universalizing claims about the category of men” (Connell; Messerschmidt; 2005; 832). Issues of power for example were not only core to feminist movements but were further fundamental to the gay liberation movement. Feminist movements questioned and continue to question the oppression of women by men, as well as the oppression by men on other men (Connell; Messerschmidt; 2007; 833). Ratele however notes that one of the reasons these masculinities continue to perpetuate violent oppression of women is because they have not yet aligned themselves with feminism and women’s movements. Collier and Messerschmidt also highlight that these challenges to the dominant patterns of masculinity are not only open to scrutiny from women’s resistance to patriarchy, but also from ‘other’ masculinities (Collier, Messerschmidt; 2005; 848). Another reason for the perpetuation of this violence can be due to feelings of anxiety or burdens experienced by effects of little or no income for example, which prompts violent reactions against women, feminism or women’s independence. Baker and Ricardo echo the idea that a lack of financial status can be seen as an inability to reach a socially respected level of manhood and these men are more likely to be engaged in violent behaviours (Baker; Ricardo; 2005; 3). Jefferson suggests that boys and men choose those discursive positions that help them ward off anxiety and avoid feelings of powerlessness (Ratele; 2008; 520). Furthermore, Kimmel (1994) argues that “violence is the single most evident marker of manhood” and therefore most men will always show willingness and desire to fight (Kimmel; 1994; 148). For Kimmel, these views on the ‘ideal masculine identity’ are inherent from early adolescence and he highlights that as young boys, peers are “gender police” threatening to unmask any feminine behaviours (Kimmel; 1994; 148).

Collier (1995) argues that in law, men’s subjectivities have been valorised through reference to a naturalised heterosexual subject position and that, though socio-economic shifts over the past century have reconstituted or ‘modernised’ heterosexual masculinity, the law continues to be concerned with protecting a dominant ideal of masculinity (Collier; 1995). However, Morell strives to remind us that

not all men are the same and they do not all have the same privileges and power. He furthers his argument by highlighting that some men are dominated and oppressed by others on grounds of race, social class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability (Morell; 16; 2007).

Morell (2007) analyses gender-based violence in the South African context in relation to historical constructions of masculinity. Morell argues that colonialism and apartheid legitimised violence as part of the basis for the construction of masculinity, and this violence became and 'natural state' of gender relations between men and women in South Africa (Morell; 17; 2007). In his 2005 research on boys in Southern Africa in the context of HIV/AIDS, Pattman explores how boys who are seen as 'problematic' in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic go through the process of identity construction. Especially in a Southern African context, Pattman argues that there has been a particular focus on boys and sexual irresponsibility and violence, which many writers argue is a mechanism by which 'black men' assert themselves (Pattman; 2005). Similar to Morell's argument, Pattman argues that these violent masculinities are rooted in apartheid and thus the image of black men as "foot soldiers in the struggle for political change have become redundant in the post-apartheid context" leading to feelings of estrangement and uncertainty (Pattman; 2005). However Pattman does not view this aspect of violent masculinity or problematic boys in the context of HIV as a hegemonic characteristic of all 'black' men. Instead he argues that one main social issue which needs to be addressed is that sexuality tends to be constructed as an attainment of adult identity in many societies.

Bhana and Pattman's (2011) insightful research explores how young people address issues of gendered environments and HIV risk in relation to love and economic and social circumstances. They argue that this is a space in which gendered inequalities are reproduced as young people attempt to express love in a context of poverty and economic marginalisation. Again the need to uphold the provider masculinity image which is seen as 'real' masculinity is one that places young boys and girls in zones where they have to continuously negotiate social contexts which give meaning to gender and sexuality (Bhana, Pattman; 2011).

Heterosexuality outside questions of HIV transmission

Pattman's (2002) research on masculinities at the University of Botswana provides interesting insight into the creation of masculinity and the centrality of heterosexuality in relation to gendered constructions of respectability, status and familial connection. In his interviews with men students at the University of Botswana, many of the participants mocked the Christian students for not engaging in heterosexual relationships with their girlfriends and therefore they were not seen as 'proper men' (Pattman; 2002; 35). In contrast, the other men participants spoke openly and proudly about their heterosexual desires and how this was significant to their construction of masculinity at the university, showing how maintaining an outward heterosexual identity was significant to respectability and status among the students. Furthermore, men avoided speaking about using protection and getting tested in fear of being ridiculed for being more 'feminine.' The male participants also pointed out that ability to confidently 'mix' with students of the opposite sex, as well as engaging in leisure activities such as drinking were characteristics that the men students regarded as contributing factors to 'student masculinity' at the university (Pattman; 2002; 35). These drinking men were more respected as real men in society and Pattman notes that "the attention they received...suggests they were extremely influential as a symbolic category in relation to which many men constructed their identity" (Pattman; 2002; 35).

In his research on homosexuality in Zimbabwe, Epprecht (1998) not only highlights the impact that cultural historical practices have on masculinity and ideas of heterosexuality, but that 'the church' also had a major influence on the formation of the ideal masculine behaviours in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the significance of a 'proper' outward appearance is one that Epprecht notes as important in many African cultures, this he terms "the political economy of heterosexuality" (Epprecht; 1998; 633). Similar to the arguments presented by Connell and Messerschmidt, it can be said that many men have resorted to embodying or enacting a socially acceptable masculine identity and therefore hiding and denying "unpleasant" forms of masculinity. Additionally, the significance of fertility in marriage is an aspect that is seen as important to adulthood for both men and women, especially those of Africa background. Those who remained without children for a prolonged period of time were objects of social ridicule and disgrace amongst the Shona, as infertile men were seen as

unsuccessful at their primary marital duty, which was to marry and have children (Epprecht; 1998; 634).

Gaidzanwa's (2007) research places a focus on gender in post-flag democracy Zimbabwe with a specific analysis of the current political, economic and social crisis. The use of these political and economic discourses is especially important when reviewing how masculinities are shaped, especially in modern day Zimbabwe. Gaidzanwa makes an important point when she highlights how men's identities and self-esteem are tied to the economic contributions they make to their households and families; which is directly places men within heterosexual partnerships (Gaidzanwa; 2007; 61).

As argued by Epprecht and Pattman and Gaidzanwa, the significance of maintaining an outward 'heterosexual identity' and performing according to certain standards remains central to many men, especially those within an African context. Once again, this is on the basis of wanting to be seen as a 'real man' both within one's family by being a provider, and by having being open about one's heterosexual desires which are seen as crucial to the construction of masculinity (Pattman; 2002; 35). Drawing from the above authors' arguments, I aim to research this further with my participants, as they discuss their understandings about 'real masculinity' from both a traditional and religious perspective.

Migrant men: colonialism and post-colonialism

Whether from a political, economic or social lens, the issue of migration is one that has become increasingly common in the last decade. Since societies play a crucial role in determining the parameters of gender, migration has become a common reality for most men as they are seen as the break winners of their families. Morell and Ouzgane's (2005) research collected discusses how male identity is shaped by cultural forces, and what it means to be African and masculine. The authors argue that colonialism and certain religious systems and patriarchal cultural structures create certain masculine identities and sexualities (Morell, Ouzgane; 2005). Throughout the research, I shall employ research material collated by Morell and Ouzgane, including those by Morell; Bhana and Pattman who explore different ideas on the construction of masculinity with a particular interest on different African Contexts. Morell (1998) highlights how colonialism created new and transformed existing masculinities. Under colonialism positions of domination and subordination were created along the

lines of race, bequeathing to the region the language of white men and black ‘boys’” (Morell; 1998). Chisoro (2013) argues that colonialism “as it came with industrialisation had an impact on high levels of male migration from rural to urban areas in search of employment” caused men to venture into the unknown in order to sustain their families who remained in the rural areas (Chisoro; 2013; 2).

Over the last two decades there has been an increased number of political and economic breakdowns which result in wide spread poverty, drought, instability and war have resulted in the need for many to migrate in order to pursue a better way of life. Chisoro argues that these issues have “contributed immensely to change in carrying out of masculine livelihood strategies by men” because as providers men are face a difficult challenge if they are unable to sustain a family (Chisoro; 2013). Many African communities have also been affected by climate change as they depend on natural resources for practices such as agriculture and livestock rearing, these result in droughts and therefore men need to migrate to seek other opportunities. The social pressure placed on men force them into sometimes engage “in life threatening or criminal activities like; theft, illegal mining, cross border jumping” to other towns as a means to source alternative incomes (Chisoro; 2013; 3). Furthermore the additional pressure of fatherhood for migrant men leaves most men feeling emasculated or alienated as the mother is required to play both the father and mother role, affecting gender roles in the home. Similar to Chisoro’s research on post-colonial Zimbabwe, Walker and Reid’s (2005) collection examines ‘new masculinities’ formed in the post-apartheid period, particularly with regards to sexuality and social transition. They argue that aspects of male privilege were destabilized due to the challenge of orthodox masculinities and the emerging of new masculinities resulting in a ‘crisis’ of masculinity’ (Walker, Reid; 2005). Their research is particularly crucial to my research as they explore how men negotiate their manhood in a period of social turbulence and transition, and how this affected their relationship to other men and to women.

In her 1997 study that “examines the way in which miners construct their social identities within the parameters of their particular living and working conditions,” Campbell argues that “levels of HIV infection are particularly high amongst migrant workers in sub-Saharan Africa” especially for migrant men in a mining setting (Campbell; 1997). In addition to exposure and vulnerability, Matshaka (2009) argues that most men who chose to emigrate are faced with restrictive immigration regulations and

social hostility from more stable bordering nations and are likely to struggle with limited access to socio-economic opportunities (Matshaka; 2009; 65). As a result of all these social limitations migrant men face the daily challenge of negotiating their gendered identities in these new complex spaces. Similar to most authors who explore the topic of migrant masculinities in Southern Africa, Matshaka argues that “the migration experiences of these young men present them with the opportunity to recreate and construct ideals of masculinity that eventually allow them to cope with the marginalising and often hostile context” (Matshaka; 2009; 65).

Underexplored Masculinities

The following section shall explore research on masculinities which I argue have been largely underexplored on an African context including masculinity in relation to religious men, gay men, transgender men, and men who live in multiple relationships to ancestry and urban life. I engage with literature by Pattman who has insightfully explored religious men, as well as research by Chitando, Epprecht, Baker and Morell who provide contextual research on different discourses on of African masculinities. Although primary research on these subjects has begun, I argue that the study of the above-mentioned African masculinities is still relatively underdeveloped.

Reshaping masculinities: men who live in multiple relationships to ancestry and urban life

In their study on African men who settle in the Diaspora, Mungai and Pease (2009) state that although some basic aspects of pre-colonial African masculine characteristics have survived over time, many changes have also occurred as a result of urbanization, globalization, colonialism and religion which reshape these basic aspects (Mungai, Pease; 2009; 96). They argue that “all of these experiences can be seen as a result of forces of modernity and their impact has led to reshaping of traditional ways of life” (Mungai, Pease; 2009; 96). As a result many African men have had to negotiate trajectories of creating an identity impacted by remnants of ancestral and westernised versions of masculinity. It is however important in to avoid generalising the experiences of African men as they have experienced different impacts of colonialism, as well as a balance between modern and

traditional lives. For men who live in multiple relationships to ancestry and urban life, the negotiation process is fluid and complex seeing that traditional ideas of African manhood bestows specific responsibilities to a man which are in relation to the wider community, his family, his clan and his age group (Mungai, Pease; 2009; 98). The attempt to blend these African cultural practices in modern day Africa has posed as a problematic experience for most men, especially due to the influence of Christianity which many argue has challenged hegemonic forms of African masculinity (Mungai, Pease; 2009; 99). Furthermore the urban setting has created a shift in gender roles where women are gaining more economic opportunities and have made many advances which pose as a challenge to the ancestral African masculine identity. Mungai and Pease argue that “in Western countries, as women have made advances, men have felt their power and control slipping and have experienced a sense of crisis” (Mungai, Pease; 2009; 101). However, despite these changes that caused many to live an urban lifestyle, Little (1957) argues that Africans continue to negotiate with relationships to ancestry life as “many of the principle agents of cultural change nowadays are Africans themselves” therefore “although much of the traditional life has disintegrated, new forms of social organization have arisen out of the older social structure” (Little; 1957; 579).

Masculinity and religion

Although there has been vast research on masculinity, it has drawn often from Northern oriented studies, either in extension or in debate with these. Issues of ritualization and religion, often extremely significant to the gendering of men in an African context, have been overlooked in research on masculinity.

Chitando highlights how the significance of Christianity later led to the changes in the significance of cultural-based and traditional names in favour of Christian names in Zimbabwe. In modern day Zimbabwe, religions such as Christianity are freely adopted and many people’s lives are shaped by the dual adoption of traditional cultural practices and beliefs, and versions of the Christian faith.

Pattman’s research at the University of Botswana also highlights aspects about being gendered, especially how ‘student masculinities’ are shaped and how different men view each other. Interestingly many of his male participants were rather critical of Christians for being “hypocritical” and

for their “opposition to forms of student hedonism, namely drinking, smoking and extra-marital sex” (Pattman; 2002; 35). To these criticisms, Christian men were not seen as ‘proper men’ because they were not engaging in sexual activities with their girlfriends thus not being seen as real men (Pattman; 2002; 35). It was also important to the male students to regard themselves as “traditional” and they continued to perpetuate what they regarded as ‘real masculinity’; for example “Ugandans made drinking not only a key and defining part of their male culture but also a contributing factor to women becoming ‘lose’” (Pattman; 2002; 36).

Analyzing these different authors’ views on masculinity highlights the importance of different discourses and how these shape ideas about masculinity. Although Northern authors such as Connell and Messersmidt present an insightful research into masculinity, particularly through the concept of hegemonic masculinity, they have largely overlooked the significance of race and religion.

Gay masculinities: ‘Real’ manhood and homosexuality

Epprecht explores the complexities surround homosexuality among men in Zimbabwe, and how this was viewed as not only foreign to the masculine identity itself, but also foreign to the indigenous people who believed that homosexuality was brought by western settlers (Epprecht; 1998; 631). His research explores the reasons for the denial of indigenous masculinities, and the over-assertive masculinist behaviours adopted by Zimbabwean men. He further expounds some dominant ideologies of masculinity that have led to the ‘invisibility’ and silences around homosexuality among men in Zimbabwe. Although homosexual behaviours among men were more prevalent in some areas during the colonial era, these relations later became disapproved of and more constrained “by the imperatives of the pre-modern political economy” (Epprecht; 1998; 632). Epprecht explains how these male-to-male sexualities remained deeply buried and unspoken of among Zimbabwean men, due to the view that homosexual behaviour is ‘un-African’ and goes against traditional family values. Bell (2000) presents an insightful research on ‘rural gay masculinity’ in relation to cultural constructions of this identity in which he argues that the existence of stereotypes in many rural communities has continued to abhor gay masculinities. With a particular focus on the accounts of the lives of ‘farm boys’, Bell notes that there is a rural/urban divide that complicates how men negotiate homosexual

ways of life in cultural contexts and practices due to dominant modes of representation defined in a community (Bell; 2000). The complexities experienced when attempting to negotiate life as a homosexual man have further been convoluted due to “governmental derogation’s of such rights, and as a result of individual affirmations of social identities which deliver these rights” (Philips; 2000; 1). Philips argues that it is these governmental and social forces that deprive these men and women who identify as homosexual of their agency, thus forcing them to negotiate with discourses of ‘morality’ and locate this homosexual identity as ‘unnatural’ (Philips; 2000; 4).

In contrast to research presented above, Levine and Kimmel’s (1998) on gay masculinities in the Western world explore other literature and social notions of gay masculinities in a language both celebratory and critical. Before the period where gay men had ‘thrown off’ the social stigma as “failed men” Levine and Kimmel argue that “gay men were real men, and their sense of themselves as gay was shaped by the same forces by which they experienced themselves as men: traditional masculinity” (Levine, Kimmel; 1998; 1). Although there has been a vast amount of research on gay masculinity, most has created a homogenous homosexual identity. I find Levine and Kimmel’s research insightful as they present a discussion the existence of a variety of masculinities within the gay masculine community therefore arguing that one cannot speak of one singular definition of a homosexual identity. Similar to studies on and discussion of different African masculinities, Levine and Kimmel argue that “there are many homosexualities, variations of homosexual identity and behaviour that are dependent on different race, ethnicity, age, and of course gender” (Levine, Kimmel; 1998; 1). Although there is an overall general stereotype in many communities when discussing aspects of homosexuality and the ‘gay man’ in both African and Western communities, the literature presented above has shown African or black communities to be more critical of homosexual men.

Theoretical research on masculinities central to my research

My interest in exploring masculinity in Africa is strongly linked to Baker and Ricardo’s argument that “in much of Africa, where bride-price is commonplace, marriage and family formation are directly tied to having income and/or property” (Baker; Ricardo; 2005; 5). Similar to Epprecht, Baker and Ricardo also indicate that processes of rituals are central to becoming a man in many African cultures, and

that this naturally creates a hierarchy where older men are given power over the younger men. Furthermore it differentiates 'men' from 'boys' until a point where these 'boys' are ritualized into manhood. One example explored in Baker and Ricardo's research is that of initiation ceremonies in Sub-Saharan Africa, and how these rites of passage are a form of social control as they are overseen by the older men who help boys to become 'men'. In addition, Baker and Ricardo echo Ratele's argument that "there is no typical young man in sub-Saharan Africa and no single African version of manhood." Instead, these masculinities are constantly changing and are affected by one's surroundings. For example, there are different versions of manhood associated with war as there are with farming or cattle-herding (Baker, Ricardo; 2005; 9). Barker and Ricardo further highlight that one's ethnic or tribal background would be different from the 'newer' versions of masculinity affected by Islam or Christianity and other Western influence for example. Although Ritcher and Morell argue that achieving masculinity can differ from context to context, they highlight a few significant achievements that set a social standard for transitioning into masculinity in a Southern African context. For example, marriage, the vote, owning a gun or opening a bank account were some ways in which men historically transitioned into manhood (Ritcher, Morell; 2006; 15).

From the brief review of dominant critical threads of masculinities research above, I argue that a broad review of research on masculinities done in the North, such as that undertaken by Connell and Collier do not include notions of post-flag democracy, colonisation and liberation which are of central importance when designing new research on masculinities. I am especially interested in under-researched forms of masculinities, and have chosen to focus on the representation of religiosity as it intertwines with masculinity in 'African' men's lives. I will be moving from a generic use of the term 'African', to the specifics of the ways in which settled but migrant Zimbabwean men, who are deeply religious as Christian fundamentalists, represent their masculinity as it is lived out within their stories of marriage and negotiating *lobola*.

Theories of heterosexuality and successful masculinity

“While feminists have provided a long and sustained critique of heterosexuality as an institution in society, it remains idealised, unquestioned and naturalised, given the ‘invisible power of heteronormativity as the enduring ideological formation in post-apartheid South Africa” (Steyn, Van Zyl; 2009; 3).

Similar to many African countries, issues of heterosexuality are extremely significant within social definitions of ‘real’ manhood in Southern Africa. Shefer (2009) argues that in many communities men are viewed as being in control of relationships and sexuality, which is especially influenced by cultural constructions of male and female sexuality (Shefer; 2009; 7). Her research further argues that “the ‘male sexual drive discourse’ (Hollway, 1989) is linked to hegemonic constructions of masculinity and plays itself out particularly powerfully in the negotiation of heterosex” (Shefer; 2009; 7). Therefore, any alternative sexuality that is ‘different’ to the traditional image of ‘macho masculinity’ is not well tolerated in many African communities. In their exploration of the power of heteronormativity, Steyn and Van Zyl (2009) argue that one’s sexuality is shaped by understandings of self-hood, relations to others and how one fits into cultural institutions including schools, religious institutions, family and the law. These institutions create social pressures that force individuals to conform and perform according to certain influences, in which “the most prized sexual liaison would be a monogamous same ‘race’, heterosexual union between two able bodies adults” (Steyn, van Zyl; 2009; 4).

The introduction of Christianity in many African nations influenced the significance of heterosexuality as the expected way of life in society. Pereira (2009) discusses the topic of sexuality and heterosexuality where she highlights how issues of sexuality are centered on the complex ideas of “social rules, economic structures, political battles and religious ideologies” which surround expressions of intimacy and relationships (Pereira; 2009; 18). Pereira argues that these questions around sexuality and heterosexuality in a community are based on how boys and girls are socialised, and how the community defines its policies around gender and sex orders. She highlights how discourses around the politics of sex and sexuality have expanded to cover issues of ‘normative heterosexuality’ and compulsory heterosexuality in different communities. Tamale (2013) supports

this argument by stating that “sexuality therefore becomes a critical site for the maintaining patriarchy and reproducing African women’s oppression” (Tamale; 2013; 19). She supports Pereira’s above argument noting that political, social and religious fundamentalism plays a significant role in the stifling of sexual pluralism by upholding “selective sexual morality” standards (Tamale; 2013; 19). Nations such as Zimbabwe and Uganda are prime examples of the embedded institutionalization of heterosexuality which is enforced by religious, political and social policies. However, it is important to note that heterosexuality is a complex and diverse issue which is also associated with varying degrees of respectability and status, and is based on the intersection between gender and sexuality (Pereira; 2009; 19).

Similarly, issues surrounding ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ in many societies are as a result of “traditional gender arrangements and monogamy” (Ampofo, Boateng; 2007). Furthermore, most research on African heterosexual men predominantly discusses the ‘African man’ in relation to HIV/AIDS and being polygamous by nature (Ampofo; 2001). It can be argued that issues of power and control in society are seen to affect men and women differently in that “women’s lived relations of heterosexuality have to be understood against the background of a general acceptance of men’s rights to have sexual access to women” (Pereira; 2009; 19). Ampofo and Boateng argue that the style of gender and sexual interaction between men and women is embedded and rehearsed during adolescence in which men view women as sexual objects. As boys are socialised into manhood through these performances, this signifies their transition into active heterosexuality (Ampofo, Boateng; 2007). Therefore just as the cultural discourses that influence practices such as *lobola* and privilege men with power and control; it can also be argued that the heterosexual ideal also provides men with structural privileges in society.

The influence of many social and cultural customs in Zimbabwe has contributed to shaping ideas about the ideal or acceptable identities and way of living in society. Tamale argues that the prohibition of ‘sex outlaws’ in many social settings silences the voices of certain groups and allows the patriarchal state to gain control, making it difficult for them to advocate for their rights (Tamale; 2013). Furthermore, the influence of religion and traditional practices are the two predominant aspects that have shaped these ideal gender identities in society. For example, Christianity and Islam are the two

dominant religions in many African countries and these both uphold the significance of marriage and heterosexuality. Shefer (2009) points that manhood is usually associated with heterosexuality and the ability to be sexual with multiple women (Shefer; 2009). Compulsory heterosexuality is also a predominant discourse that informs one's decision on marriage. One reason for heterosexuality being a significant influence on selecting a partner is that in many African nations homosexual marriages are currently illegal and not recognized (Tamale; 2013). Tamale further explores how civil liberties and non-confirming sexualities are therefore rarely discussed in Africa. In her study she notes that "homophobia has become a political tool used by conservative politicians to promote self-serving agendas" and therefore heterosexuality is idealised as part of 'African' politics (Tamale; 2013). Epprecht's (1998) study on homosexuality in Zimbabwe provides much insight into the significance of maintaining a heterosexual image especially for men socialised and living in an African setting. This is primarily because homosexuality is seen as 'unnatural' to African men and instead some Zimbabweans in the colonial era argued that it brought by western settlers, therefore denying any forms of indigenous homosexual identities. Although the outward recognition of homosexual identities has been embraced by some societies and upheld by organizations such as the Gay and Lesbian Association in Zimbabwe, it is still a sensitive topic that creates divisions in families and in society. Epprecht argues that during the colonial era the Zimbabwean society was heavily influenced by the church and Christian doctrines which uphold heterosexuality as the only desired sexual identity, and uphold the union of marriage as sacred and core to maintaining the 'correct family value system' (Epprecht; 1998; 633).

The fear of public shame and ridicule made it taboo to openly discuss issues of child sexual abuse, incestuous relationships and same-sex relationships. One of Epprecht's interview participants noted that as young children they were warned by the elders to avoid certain 'other men' in the village, and only when this interview participant grew older did he understand that the elders were warning them against socializing with these 'other men' because they were accused of being homosexuals. From her account in Uganda, Tamale (2013) argues that "socio-cultural norms and religious beliefs constitute the screws that keep the clamp of sexual repression firmly in place" (Tamale; 2013; 18). Therefore, there is a strong sense of control in many African societies where men are under pressure to live the 'correct form of masculinity' in order to avoid being ostracized or accused of being spiritually possessed. The denial of the existence of homosexuality was further embedded in

Zimbabwean languages, where the indigenous languages in Zimbabwe did not have a word for homosexuality until the late nineteenth century, where words like *ngochani* were now adopted from other African languages to describe the act of homosexuality (Epprecht; 1998; 637). Tamale (2013) argues that “one of the most efficient ways that patriarchy uses sexualities as a tool to create and sustain gender hierarchy in African societies is by enshrouding it in secrecy and taboos” (Tamale; 2013). Therefore the avoidance of an open discussion leaves certain groups marginalized and submissive due to fear of discussion.

Drawing from the literature above, I argue that the significance of a ‘proper’ outward appearance was and continues to be crucial to many African men. The political economy of heterosexuality also extended into affecting one’s ability to accumulate wealth in that having many wives and many children gave men status and access to more land. Therefore the importance of an acceptable outward appearance was not only significant for one’s personal status in society, but also extended to affect their long-term economic security. Due to this, it is not uncommon to for young Zimbabwean men or women who have openly ‘come out’ as gay to still marry someone of the opposite sex and have families in order to appear ‘normal’ or because of the social and traditional tensions created by living their openly homosexual status. Similar to many African cultures, there was and still is an avoidance of openly discussing issues of sexual matters and same-sex issues in Zimbabwean culture. Epprecht terms this as the “embedded culture of discretion- don’t ask don’t tell” (Epprecht; 1998; 635). From a Zimbabwean cultural perspective, many men would then maintain a heterosexual manly façade by getting married and having children in order to avoid insults or accusations of spiritual possession and witchcraft. Shire (1994) describes how these alternative behaviours were described as ‘satanic’ masculinities which was also a term influenced by colonial Christian discourses to describe homosexual men. Cornell and Lindisfarne highlight how religious expression played a significant role in the process of recreating African culture, and defining what was ‘right’ in society. Therefore I conclude that “with respect to the socialisation of gendered sexual roles, there is wide acknowledgement of the significance of early gender development to heterosexual practices” (Shefer; 2009; 8).

Theorization of gender dynamics and the meaning of marriage in Zimbabwe

The cultural practice of marriage through the payment of *lobola* is one that is complex and always evolving, especially due to the gradual shift from traditional practices of marriage in favour of more “informal types of unions observed in African societies” (Meekers; 1993; 35). Given that my research is interested in the representations of contemporary masculinities for Zimbabwean men in a Pentecostal environment, their discourses on the meaning of marriage through the cultural practice of *lobola* were important in revealing negotiations between interlocking aspirational masculinity. This section of my literature review presents some critical research on the meaning of theorization of gender and the marriage (*lobola*) in Zimbabwe, placing this within the context of broader research on questions of heterosexuality and marriage itself.

Zimbabwe has two main forms of recognized institutions of marriage, the first being marriage based on the potentially polygamous union under the Customary Marriage Act (1997). In this form of marriage a man marries his wife based on cultural customs and he is permitted to marry as many wives as he desires. Normally this form of marriage is entered into through the negotiation and payment of *lobola* for a bride. Under the Customary Marriage Act, men would normally marry a second wife if he was unable to conceive with his first wife, and often the elders would facilitate this process. The marriage through the Customary Marriage Act can either be registered (formal) or unregistered (informal). Chirawu highlights that the unregistered form of marriage under the Customary Marriage Act would however limit ones rights to inheritance and the custody of children for example (Chirawu; 2006; 10). The second form of marriage is that entered into by the Marriage Act (1963) which is based on monogamy and can only be officiated by a church Minister or a registered magistrate. Although marriage entered into through the Marriage Act is more formal and would normally be instituted by the church, it is not uncommon for cultural marriage practices such as *lobola* to precede this form of marriage in order for it to be recognized by the bride and grooms’ families. In Chirawu’s research, he highlights that “it is also pertinent to note that although *lobola* is not a legal requirement for those who register their marriages, more often than not, couples first go through the traditional marriage ceremony where *lobola* is paid before registering their marriages” which highlights the significance of *lobola* in Zimbabwean marriages (Chirawu; 2006; 17). However, marriage under

the Marriage Act is instrumental in limiting polygamous practices as well as adultery. For example, a person who has sexual relations with another when married within the constraints of the Marriage Act can be sued for adultery. To date, both forms of marriage are specifically significant to rights to inheritance, custody of children and compensation for infidelity (Chirawu; 2006; 11).

The significance of heterosexuality and marriage is especially important to the formation of gender identities and as well as to how one is seen to reach 'adulthood' and success in many African cultures. Although I make use of the word African to describe this, I do not attempt to homogenize all African cultures or imply that they are identical, especially because different contexts create different forms of 'African masculinities'. In particular, many African cultures view marriage through the cultural process of *lobola* as a significant process by which men achieve 'manhood' as they become heads of households and families. Similarly, marriage is seen as a significant process for women as they become daughters-in-law who are valued and respected more for having male children and continuing the family lineage. McFadden argues that many 'traditional' processes in Africa are a reflection of colonial systems which not only limited access for Africans but also where African women were denied land and other critical resources, "except as users for the purpose of reproducing the African heterosexual family" (McFadden; 2005; 67). The reproduction of the African heterosexual family was seen to benefit men and exclude women in many social, economic and political institutions. For example, some argue that the specific gendered roles within marriage and *lobola* are patriarchal because they provide men with power as the head of the household and the wife must adhere to his rules. Furthermore, they provide men with the power to control sexual issues within marriage; this therefore complicates the problem of marital rape which is a serious issue feminists continue to advocate against. Married women had no legal protection until 2001 when the Sexual Offences Act came into effect, making marital rape a punishable crime. Many authors and activists have therefore questioned women's positions and rights within the institution of marriage, culture and law.

"Another strategy which has served to keep women outside modernity under the pretext that modernity for women is un-African, is the perpetuation of a dual system of laws which applies only to Black women. White colonial women were never affected by the so-called 'customary

laws' which both White and Black men re-constituted and codified in the face of women's resistance to patriarchal restrictions and surveillance" (McFadden; year; 69).

In addition, the politics of gender during the liberation struggle and post 1980 in Zimbabwe continued to shift and change. During the war the liberation army involved changing norms about gender where women also played a crucial role, and post 1980 there was a commitment to gender equality which was a cause of tension in post- independence Zimbabwe. For example, although women had access to political equality there were still questions around women's rights to inheritance issues of gender equality as well as tensions around gender violence. For the reason that women customarily accessed land through marriage and worked jointly with their children to produce stock, Gaidzanwa (1994) argues that "women's economic wellbeing was mediated through agnatic and affinal ties to men in these kin-based societies" (Gaidzanwa; 1994; 12). She notes how colonialism then intensified women's economic reliance on men as they found it more difficult to access land for their own use in rural areas. McFadden further discusses how gender dynamics in Africa were affected by dominant colonial discourses which produced systems which kept women "outside those civic spaces that offer the possibility of autonomy and independence from male control and dependence" (McFadden; 2005; 68). Furthermore 'black' women's sexuality was contained and controlled by keeping women within rural spaces, yet allowing men to freely move. The women who managed to leave these rural spaces under an arrangement with migrant men often remained in gender normative spaces in which they would become 'wives', "cooking, cleaning and providing the man with sexual services without the couple having actually married in either the traditional or civic sense" (McFadden; 2005; 68). Other women who rejected this agreement often resorted to prostitution as a means of survival were seen as 'culture-less' in society. Stewart et al's (2000) exploration into the legal status of women in postcolonial Zimbabwe argues that the existence of a dual system of customary and general law leave women marginalized from direct control of resources mainly because "people move freely between customary law and general law picking and choosing their remedies as they meet their needs" (Stewart Et al; 2000; 13). A prime example of tense socio-political issues in post-colonial Zimbabwe was the Magaya vs. Magaya case a where widow's rights to property were not upheld justly. The Magaya versus Magaya case further highlighted how marriage is not simply a legal practice but marriage through *lobola* is a practice threatened by the relevance of modern and

economic realities. These issues of heterosexuality, gender and marriage are embedded in a conflict zone of what is constitutional and what is claimed as 'traditional'.

"Her status as a married, widowed, or divorced woman determines her social, cultural, and economic connection to the land, as well as the way in which institutional and ideological forces work to shape this gendered experience. For married women, who form the majority of women in resettlement, the institution of marriage functions from within and without the nuptial union to determine women's access to arable land" (Groebe; 2005; 60).

In the Magaya versus Magaya case Shonhiwa Magaya died without a legal will therefore the court had named his eldest child Venia Magaya as heir to his estate. However Shonhiwa's son challenged this ruling claiming that he was heir to the throne because according to African customary law, a woman cannot be heir to her father's estate when there is a man in the family who is then entitled to claim the inheritance. As a result of this, the court granted Magaya's son the inheritance. As a result, Magaya's son took possession of the household and removed the eldest sibling Venia Magaya from the household. Although Venia Magaya further appealed the decision, the Zimbabwe Supreme Court did not change the ruling because the case arose under customary law and was exempt from constitutional protections against discrimination. This issue of discrimination against women was therefore overlooked because the ruling was based on the nature of customary practices. McFadden argues that "Section 23 of the Zimbabwean Constitution states clearly that 'African' custom and tradition shall supersede any rights and entitlements that women may have been granted by the Constitution, as long as those rights and entitlements threaten the hegemony of custom and tradition" (McFadden; 2005; 70). Groebel concludes that "the initial resettlement program in Zimbabwe brought with it new institutions and new types of state involvement in agricultural production, family dynamics, and gender ideology. The resettlement process also triggered intense cultural negotiations regarding people's relationships to land and natural resources, with important gender dimensions" (Groebel; 2005; 140). Although the legal premise should allow widows and children the rights to inheritance, this highlighted the tensions caused by the dual influence of customary and constitutional laws in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, Zimbabwe is a nation that has a strong legal protection for its cultural practices and the need to apply customary law in many areas of society. Therefore women are left to

negotiate their rights in complex spaces governed by formal and informal institutions (including families), as well as through the general and customary law spaces (Goebel; 2005; 43). McFadden further argues that re-invention of custom and conventions into 'customary law' as a law that applies to everyone has become a tool which plays against women's demands for equal rights and has served the interests of black men in society (McFadden; 2005; 69).

Drawing again from the argument that marriage in Zimbabwean culture is a communal system, elders in society were more respected, more in control and seemed to set the precedent for what was seen as acceptable, especially amongst younger men and women, or for newlyweds. These elders watched closely and would intervene in cases where they saw the young woman or man was not fulfilling their customary 'gender' duties to provide children who would extend the family lineage for example. Stewart et. al (2000) further emphasises that the hegemony of the family leaves women vulnerable in that the problems they face are regarded as social and family based thus requiring family-based solutions (Stewart et.al; 2000; 13). The control and power that elders maintained further affected relationships, for example elders had the power to demand that their son divorce his wife and take a second wife if she was unable to bear children. I therefore argue that becoming a man or upholding this ideal masculine identity in the Zimbabwean culture is therefore less biological but rather a social construct where men achieve manhood or the desired form of masculinity through manly performances such as being married and having children. As argued by Ritcher and Morell, "masculinity is acted or performed in society. Boys and men choose how to behave and this choice is made from a number of available repertoires" (Ritcher, Morell; 2006; 13).

Ritcher and Morell further argue that there are strong links between manhood, power and control, and fatherhood especially in African contexts. Similarly Groes-green (2009) highlights how the man is seen as the provider and as the one who controls reproductive and sexual issues in many African societies. The Zimbabwean culture shows a strong link between men and the inheritance of power and authority as heads of the household once they have married. The ability to successfully pay *lobola* and become the head of a household was a privilege reserved for those who successfully negotiated bride price and married. This showed a man's ability to provide and lead a family, and due to this he was regarded with respect not only by his wife but by the community. Hunter (2005) further

highlights the significance of marriage by stating that men who were unmarried and had many girlfriends were seen as unclean and referred to as *isoka* which meant dirt or disgraceful act (Hunter; 2005; 394).

Groes-green points out that the introduction of Christianity during the colonial era further cemented the idea that it was a man's duty to provide for his family. From a religious perspective, heterosexuality and marriage are uplifted as the 'correct way to live' and this has significantly shaped social understandings and gender performances in African counties. Therefore there were significant links between marriage and family to political, religious and economic control during the colonial era as men were forced to work in order to provide for their families, which was also seen as doing what is 'right' according to 'Christianity' (Groes-green; 2009).

Despite the elders involvement in marital processes in Zimbabwe, it can be argued that the process of marriage can become a site of family tension, which in modern times has been coupled with the added financial pressure of both *lobola* and a costly wedding (Mupotsa; 2014; 224). For example Mupotsa quotes another author in her research who argues that "cash, rather than cattle, is now the "preferred currency" in *lobola* negotiations" (Mupotsa; 2014; 224). Coupled with the current changing economic and political climates in Zimbabwe for example, this has led many families to take advantage of the process and make high demands during the *lobola* negotiations. Chabata's (2012) research argues that *lobola* as well as the practice of traditional marriage is a patriarchal commercialised practice in that it forms a basis of the control of women and commodifies them (Chabata; 2012; 12). Although many African authors argue that this is a western view on *lobola* and marriage in African, Chabata's research draws on the views of Zimbabwean participants who have also come to view the process of marriage as an institution that is patriarchal because it has since lost its cultural and traditional meaning (Chabata; 2012; 13).

From the research above, it is clear that the significance of marriage and heterosexuality is one that has spanned across many eras in Zimbabwe; both pre- and post- colonial societies encouraged heterosexual relationships and further praised marriage. Marriage was and is still a union that encouraged heterosexuality and maintained a moral standard of living in society. Maintaining an outward heterosexual image was also significant for many reasons in the Zimbabwean community.

This affected one's identity as men and women were respected for maintaining a heterosexual image and getting married. Men who managed to get married and have children were respected as *murume chaiye* (a real man) in society. He was not only the head of his household but respected by society as well. His ability to provide for his family earned him the respect of a "man" in society which separated him from the boys. As indicated in the previous chapter on masculinity and heterosexuality, the less 'hegemonic' masculine males in society are normally subjugated and treated as subordinate masculinities. Groes-green highlights other authors' arguments that 'hegemonic masculinity' is a "normative male ideal in a society which supports the gender hierarchy and subordinates marginal masculinities and men who do not comply with it. Hence, hegemonic masculinity is to be seen as a cultural prototype" (Groes-green; 2009; 292).

Therefore, it can be said that marriage and heterosexuality is significant for many socio-economic, political and religious reasons. For example, the economic benefits one secured through marriage was solidified through payments of *lobola* transferred wealth from one family to another. In addition, having children guaranteed one access to more labour and more land in the community thus increasing their wealth. Male children would extend the family lineage whilst female children would also one day bring *lobola* to their family when they were married. However the function of customary practices and customary law was seen to benefit men and disadvantage women in many ways. McFadden argues that "customary practice functions through the perpetuation of rituals and systems that put 'black women outside the protections and entitlements which civic spaces provide to all citizens in a modern society" (McFadden; 2005; 70). Therefore when analysing gender roles, laws, customary practices and marriage in Zimbabwe, many authors praise the symbolic process of *lobola* but remain critical of the patriarchal discourses embedded in socio-political practices which are seen to disadvantage women especially within a marital union.

Lobola

For generations, the system of *lobola* has been a central part of marriage which continues to be endorsed and applied in many African cultures. Conjointly, the process has significant meanings for family building and identity formation especially with regards to gender normative roles assumed by the bride, groom as well as their future children. Samuriwo (2008) summarizes it as follows: “*lobola* is culturally regarded as a rite of passage for the betrothed, good cement for family ties, and as adding value to the familial and communal worth of a son-in-law or daughter in-law. On the other hand, *lobola* can be argued to be a totally unnecessary evil, an opportunistic agent for gender oppression, and totally irrelevant in our time” (Samuriwo; 2008). In the following section I explore the process of *lobola* further by first analysing the significance of rituals in many ‘African’ cultures. Despite generational differences, I argue that forms of ritual are still central to being African. I then discuss *lobola* as a critical process with regards to marriage. I review different authors’ arguments on the process highlighting the changes that have taken place in pre- to post- colonial societies. To develop a holistic view of the process and in light of many socio-political changes that have taken place in Zimbabwe, I connect the following literature to my overall argument by exploring the impact of *lobola* on identity formation, *lobola* and masculinity and critiques of *lobola* in contemporary society. From the literary research conducted on the topic I find that there is still a need for further development on literature discussing *lobola* and masculinities in Africa, as this is still narrow.

The significance of rituals and ritualization in Africa

“Africans ‘come out’ of African Religion but they don’t take off their traditional religiosity. They come as they are. They come as people whose world view is shaped according to African Religion” (Gathogo; 2005; 251)

In many African countries, culture and cultural practices have been significant to the formations of societies as well as to the creation of gender identities. For decades, social, political and economic environments were governed by traditional beliefs and practices that gave each person protection, rights to power, control and wealth in society. One’s gender identity is also affected by certain rites of

passage based on traditional beliefs and practices. Magesa (1997) explores how an individual's identity is inherently linked to the laws governing the society and its members therefore have a social requirement to undergo or perform certain rituals. Despite colonization in Africa which brought about significant change politically, economically and on a gendered sphere, many rituals and cultural practices such as *lobola* have still remained essential to many African people and core to the foundations of the community. Hance and Mwakabana (2002) argue that a cultural belief system is central to the African identity because it emphasises one's connection to the spirit realm and to the community which is important. This is because the "integrity of the community is sustained by a common understanding of moral and ethical values," which is a key reason for the continuous practice of many rituals and African customs in many communities today (Hance, Mwakabana; 2002; 11). Furthermore, the need to maintain a relationship between each individual and their cultural spirituality is maintained through the continuous practice of African religious activities, animal sacrifices, festivals and prayers (Hance, Mwakabana; 2002; 17). As a result community member's lives are characterised by many pivotal moments and rituals such as *lobola* to celebrate and commemorate the transition from one phase of life to another. These celebrations and rituals are not only characterised by the discourse of community, but are heavily reliant on ideas about 'religion' and spirituality.

The term ritual, according to the oxford dictionary is "a formalized mode of behaviour in which the members of a group or community regularly engage. Religion represents one of the main contexts in which rituals are practiced. But the scope of ritual behaviour extends well beyond religion" (www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/ritual). Despite condemnation of certain African traditional rituals during the colonial era, and despite the introduction of religions such as Christianity and Islam which are now predominant in Africa, Magesa argues that African Christians "seek comfort in their own religious symbol systems, even though these may not correspond exactly to those inculcated and expected by their Christian leaders" (Magesa; 1997; 33). For example, although the social practice of *lobola* has been shifted and changed due to the changing social and economic climate of Zimbabwe, it is still seen as central to many Zimbabweans who enter into the institution of marriage. The need to commemorate different stages in life with ritual practices and celebrations is also important for the protection of one's family and for the continuous growth of a lineage and

community. However, when studying how these rituals are practiced, it is important to adopt a critical lens when making an argument.

The research on ritualization in Africa is core to my research because it highlighted how both religion and culture influence each other and both continue to evolve overtime; and this overlap is central to understanding why and how African Christian men continue to uphold the practice of *lobola* in current society. Furthermore, this exploration into the significance of rituals due to the fear of curses from the unknown, and the importance of a multi-faceted identity is core, especially in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Although many may identify as 'Christian' or 'modern', there is still a connection to tradition because many people are socialised in a very cultural community, which merits those who acknowledge their 'identity' as Zimbabweans. Drawing from the use of *lobola* as an example, it can be argued that the practice of African rituals and customs is at the core of family dynamics and individual identities. The practice of *lobola* for example plays a role in transforming people and giving them a new identity, a new purpose and perhaps a new sense of belonging in society. In *lobola* the woman becomes a *muroora* and she is then taken through a series of practices that prepare her for marriage and prepare her to be the wife. Furthermore, the elders in society are provided with significant power and control during the process. The elder women in the husband's family are regarded as *tete* and they have negotiating power and are in charge of assuring that the *muroora* is prepared for her new role as a wife and future mother. The *tete* will also hold rights as the family counsellor should the couple have marital problems or should the couple fail to have children within a certain period of time. The man who is looking to marry also assumes the role of the protector of his family and his extended family. He is seen as a 'real' man and husband and assumes control of his family and gains respect of his peers and the women in the family. Therefore, upholding this ritual practice is not only a key foundation for the family as a whole but for each individuals gendered identity. Furthermore, the need for one to maintain this sense of spirituality by upholding African cultural practices is to assure that one lives a good life characterised by good health, the power to procreate, the ability to gain wealth and to assure personal dignity (Hance, Mwakabana; 2002; 17). As in the practice of *lobola*, the integrity of the family, the community and the individual is also based on one's ability to uphold 'spiritual morality' by regarding and maintaining traditional and acknowledging cultural practices.

Lobola as a critical ritual process: Pre-colonial to colonial practices

“The way in which lobola is practised and understood has changed over time and must be interpreted in the light of wider political, economic and social contexts. Nor do functions remain constant across time and space. Southern African bride wealth systems are very varied, and even where they are structurally similar, their individual functions and meanings cannot be read as identical” (Ansell; 2; 2001).

The institution of marriage is one in which a couple is united officially and becomes a family. Although this is a universal practice, systems of marriage differ between cultures across the world (Nkosi; 2011). In Zimbabwe for example the institution of marriage can be legitimized through the process of customary marriage or the marriage act. “One of the major differences between “Western” and “African” marriages, significant for the current study, is the payment of *lobola* from the groom’s family to the bride’s family” as a sign of marriage (Nkosi; 2011; 4). The following section discusses *lobola* as a significant process in Shona culture particularly for its symbolic representation of marriage, family unity and lineage continuity. I discuss this employing a critical lens into changes that have affected the practice, which has come under much scrutiny but is still significant to how most Zimbabweans marry.

“*Lobola* is a custom in which the husband (or his family on his behalf) delivers or promises to deliver to the father (or guardian) of the wife, stock or other property, in consideration of which the legal custody of the children born of the marriage is vested in their father (or his family) to the exclusion of any member of the mother’s family. *Lobola* involves some payment by the husband or his family to the family of his wife” through the process of negotiations (Chireshe; 2010; 212). Mangena and Ndlovu (2013) argue that the payment of *lobola* legitimizes the marriage which would have otherwise been disregarded. Ansell argues that “historically, most accounts of *lobola* have associated it with the rural production process. Through marriage and payment of *lobola*, a son could be transformed into a productive asset – upon marriage he would be granted land. *Lobola* was, more significantly for the wider community, the means by which lineage elders extracted labour from junior men” (Ansell; 2001; 27). Furthermore, *lobola* was also used as a means to prevent intermarriages between families which is not permitted in Shona cultural society. Only after the disowning ritual of *chekahukama* was

performed to “cut the blood lines” between forth generation decedents was marriage between them allowed by the elders (Samuriwo; 2008).

Literature discussing the practice in pre-colonial times further notes the significance of *lobola* with regard to both spiritual and emotional connotations in which “it was used to express a feeling yet at the same time, it cemented ties between the children and their maternal ancestors through for instance, the payment of *inkomo yohlanga* (cow given to the mother of the wife)” (Mangena, Ndlovu; 2013; 473). Furthermore, marriage was a sacred cultural institution which embedded the start of a new family unit in a communal nature. The communal relationship was built through a process of rituals that included the assimilation of children who were considered illegitimate into the family unit and the redistribution of wealth in the community (Ansell; 2001). For example the system of *chipanda* assured that the *lobola* payment received for the daughter’s marriage was set aside for the brother’s marriage when he would then pay *lobola*, this system assured that the brother would become his sisters protector, thus strengthening of families through the process of rituals (Samuriwo; 2008). Furthermore, the father of the bride would present a beast to the groom’s family and this “beast became the foundation of the home as it multiplied. It also protected the dignity of her family and hers throughout marriage” (Mangena; Ndlovu; 2013; 475). In essence, the process was meant to extend the family unit and give status to both the bride and groom.

In colonial and post-colonial periods, the process of *lobola* underwent radical changes. The main changes were as a result of external capitalist influences which especially affected the communal nature of the payment, turning it into a more individualistic process (Mangena, Ndlovu; 2013; 475). “The British colonisers imposed criminal and constitutional laws on Africans that promoted distorted and incompatible ideals of Victorian family life. At the same time, they regarded African customary laws as second-class, primitive and barbaric” and as a result marriages under these traditional and communal institutions were not recognized by the in colonial periods (Samuriwo; 2008). Instead women were simply placed under the guardianship of men which prevented them for attaining full legal status (Samuriwo; 2008). Samuriwo argues that the colonial interpretation of *lobola* as ‘bride price’ or ‘wife purchase’ began to distort the traditional meaning and symbolism of the process, subsequently placing women in more oppressive spaces “than they had been in pre-colonial times” due to the repressive systems embedded in customary law (Samuriwo; 2008). The introduction of

cash and wage labour as the new form of formal payment in society affected social power relations and the way in which *lobola* was structured. Ansell notes how the introduction of colonialism meant that men's labour was not in exchange for cash payments from the white-owned farmer, factories and mines which was now being considered of greater value than exchanging labour for land or agricultural goods, as was the past practice in rural areas (Ansell; 2001).

This individualistic shift from a communal focus transformed the process as a whole, meaning the father of the bride could be the sole receiver of the payment and the family was no longer obligated to pay the bride price on behalf of the groom. Mangena and Ndlovu argue that "the transformation from a communal to a private transaction is one of the many signs that payment of bride price has spiraled out of the control of culture" (Mangena, Ndlovu; 2013; 476). The introduction of colonialism was met with significant migration which allowed (men especially) to move out of the village to more urban areas which resulted in more freedom from elders who regulated bride payments, oversaw families and controlled sexual behaviour of the younger generation. Furthermore "industrialisation and the development of mining gave young men access to salaries and other resources that made them less dependent on their families for marriage payments" (Samuriwo; 2008). As a result many men began to acquire 'wives' without the need for cultural rituals of marriage and communal oversight. Furthermore, some women who moved into these urban towns resorted to prostitution and other activities to provide for themselves, thus disregarding the significance to adhere to traditional hegemonic family concepts embedded in the community.

"Such a system is, of course, liable to abuse in an increasingly commercial society. Fathers demand unduly high amounts for educated daughters as a recompense for the money they have invested in educating their girls" (Mangena, Ndlovu 2013; 476).

In modern times, education, new laws, human rights issues, migration and new forms of partnership have almost rendered the process insignificant and outdated. One point of contention on the significance of *lobola* in Zimbabwe is the existence of a duality of laws. "*Lobola* is no longer an essential ingredient for the validation of marriage following the Legal Age of Majority Act (1982)" (Samuriwo; 2008). An increase in religious fundamentalism in modern day Zimbabwe means that many have decided to simply marry within the bounds of the church or the magistrate's court,

although my research will uncover that this particular argument is still debatable. Secondly, the commercialisation of the process in which other 'payments' in the form of groceries, cell phones and cars as part of the bride payment has led to the criticism and abandonment of the process by many. Samuriwo argues that the commercialization of the process meant that women became tools in which changing power relations were mediated thus gradually attaching a woman's worth in society to the bride prices she would fetch (Samuriwo; 2008). The introduction of the formal system of education resulted in more value being placed on education which has led many families to request a higher *lobola* for their daughter, arguing that an educated girl is of more value to her husband than an uneducated one (Samuriwo; 2008). Mangena and Ndlovu make note of this by discussing how "some Shona communities now have a separate charge for a girl who gets married soon after University graduation. This particular girl attracts a high charge because she possesses what is called *chitupa chinyoro*; which can be loosely translated into "a fresh educational certificate" (Mangena, Ndlovu; 2013; 476). They argue that although the pre-colonial process of *lobola* was one that was communal and would cater to the 'poor' by allowing a man to work for his father-in-law instead of paying *lobola*, this has since changed. Thus the ability to access funds is the only way a man is deemed marriageable in contemporary society. Samuriwo argues that "left to its own devices, and manipulated by greedy in-laws, *lobola* is not only harming women but disenfranchising men too" as they are unable to marry if they cannot provide financially (Samuriwo; 2008). I shall explore this argument further in my analytic chapter. The inability to access funds has led to many modern men to overlook the *lobola* payment and instead they have families without the mandatory trouble of bride payments (Mangena, Ndlovu; 2013; 476). Furthermore, "in cases where the world has shrunk into "a global village", boys and girls get married to people from other cultures that do not necessarily value bride price payment," and in many cases the concept of marriage itself is slowly losing its value (Mangena; Ndlovu; 2013; 476). The contention of *lobola* working within a complex environment of strained resources has come to affect questions about money and family as a function within marriage. In modern times, many are faced with the conflict of either choosing to have one wedding, or to have two weddings- one within the cultural context of *lobola* and another within the 'modern' or 'Christian' context of a church wedding with a white wedding dress. This tense decision process is based on one's values, that is, if they value their culture as well as their identity as Christians. This has brought about of tension within families where some members value the cultural practice and therefore despite being Christians, or

despite the strenuous financial environment they must practice *lobola*. One of the major critiques of *lobola* in contemporary society is based on questioning the 'status' it awards women and the vulnerability to abuse women face within marriage. I discuss this more in detail in the subsection below. Many authors and activists such as those from the WLSA advocate for the abolishment of *lobola* sighting that "a tradition, which originally elevated the status of a woman, has transformed into a way of disempowering her" (WLSA; 2003) However, despite this widespread critique, there are still many who advocate for *lobola* as a critical ritual process in Shona and other African cultures. Furthermore, despite the vast amount of literature on *lobola* and its significance and/or critiques, I argue that literature on *lobola*, masculinity and the man's complex negotiating position is limited. "In essence, for both the Shona and the Ndebele, a man was nothing without woman and a woman was nothing without a man. In addition, both were nothing if the child was not the centre of the family created by the man and the woman. All payments were done in the establishment of a new family. Generally, the whole process was perceived as an effort to accord women status" (Mangena; Ndlovu; 2013; 475).

Lobola, heterosexuality and gendered identities

"The 'value' of bride-wealth (Lobola) is measured on the premise that it serves a number of purposes: the distribution of productive and reproductive resources, including the transfer of rights, particularly of a woman's procreative capacities, from her natal family to the groom's family; the sustenance of measures of social control between generations and genders; and finally that it serves as a means for people to claim a cultural identity" (Mupotsa; 2014; 221)

Ritualization around marriage in Zimbabwe has long been formulated and practised around the inevitability of heterosexuality. For example, the process of *lobola* is embedded in heterosexual roles which award both the bride and groom specific gender normative roles which include the bride becoming the home maker and bearing children, whilst the groom becomes the provider, protector and head of the family. For the reason that cultural gender roles are clearly dichotomised on a heterosexual basis, this makes it complex to practise for a homosexual couples seeking to marry within the process of *lobola*. The laws governing marriage both from a Customary Marriage

perspective and from the Marriage Act are also created on the basis of compulsory heterosexuality where a man marries a woman (Nkosi; 2011; 2). As mentioned above, the negotiation process is one that is overseen by the male representative of each family as they are seen as the heads of the households and thus have rights over their daughters and lineage relationships. This cultural process which awards men the rights over familial decisions is embedded in traditional patriarchal social practices which uphold the man of the family as the provider and leader (Nkosi; 2011; 16). Furthermore issues of inheritance are also premised on the basis of heterosexuality where a man who does not pay *lobola* has no rights over his children, who are customarily seen to belong to his wife's lineage. These customary laws are based on relationships established between a bride's family and groom's family, and to date this has not been altered to accommodate same-sex marriages. Although recognition of marriage by the law is relatively similar in many counties, the process of marriage in a Zimbabwean context is unique firstly because of the significance of *lobola* as a practice that governs marriage beyond the law; and secondly because of the significance of cultural beliefs and rituals that have made heterosexuality and marriage important in Zimbabwe.

“Women and men appear to have different responsibilities within the lobola practice and it is significant to understand the basis of the distribution of these responsibilities” (Nkosi; 2011; 15)

As mentioned above, marriage through *lobola* is also significant to identity formation, as one goes through the process of *lobola*. In this process a girl is seen to transition from being a young girl into the 'maker of a home' and similarly, men move from being young boys to being heads of households. Nkosi (2011) accounts that “by virtue of biology, women are perceived to be more nurturing thus better suited for taking care of the family in the home by cooking, cleaning and being emotionally supportive” (Nkosi; 2011;15). Furthermore, marriage was seen as the foundation for the extension of the family lineage and economic growth in Zimbabwean culture (Dekker; 2002; 7). Hunter's research on cultural politics and masculinities in Kwazulu-Natal supports this idea when he states that the accumulation of cattle and many wives meant that a man had more labour to control and this would not only increase his economic wealth, but he was also respected as an *umnumzana* (household head) (Hunter; 2005).

Despite awarding men and women status upon marriage through *lobola*, they were both only deemed 'successful' in their marriage if they managed to have children. In Shona culture fertility is seen as significant in marriage and affected both men and women's identities as this was seen as a social definition of success and adulthood (Nkosi; 2011; 10). Men or women who did not produce children after a long period in marriage were a source of social ridicule. This especially affected masculine identities, because being able to reproduce was a mark of manhood. Shire's insight into 'Zimbabwean masculinities' further emphasises how the wives were a source of praise for the husbands and through this praise they affirmed particular masculinities in society. In this context, Shire highlights how these praises gave men the right to boast about his "sexual prowess and fertility" which was and is significant to manhood in Zimbabwean culture (Shire; 1994; 155). Nkosi agrees with this argument by noting that "power dynamics are perceived to play a role in the ascription and practice of gender roles. Gender power dynamics include negotiation of power and authority over certain issues between women and men" which create authoritative and subordinate roles (Nkosi; 2011; 15). I shall discuss this link between *lobola* and masculinity further in the subsection below.

Lobola and Masculinity

"A gendered analysis of young men must take into account the plurality of masculinities in Africa. Versions of manhood in Africa are socially constructed, fluid over time and in different settings, and plural...Initiation practices or rites of passage are important factors in the socialization of boys and men throughout the region" (Baker, Ricardo; 2005; V).

For both men and women, systems of ritualization are in many cases a process of shifting identities, gaining status and authority as well as a time in which they are viewed as real men or women in society. Mager (2007) discusses the construction and reconstruction of masculinities in relation to ritualization with a particular focus on changing masculinities in Transkei the 1950's. She argues that through the process of ritual, boys and young men are constantly reconstructing a "distinction between boyhood and manhood" around rituals in which they reinvent "notions of masculinity in the shadow of decreasing prospects of establishing themselves as men" (Mager; 2007). As argued previously, the process of paying *lobola* and getting married for Shona men is characterised by

certain performances of masculinity which these men must embody to be deemed as 'successful'. Ansell notes that "the system of *lobola* arguably serves a multiplicity of purposes within Southern African society, both material (in terms of distribution of both productive and consumable resources), symbolic (relating to the construction of social identity, particularly sexual and gender identities, but also the transition to adulthood and establishing the nature of relationships between people" (Ansell; 2001; 3). In the pre-colonial practice of *lobola*, men transitioned from being young men into a more authoritative form of manhood when they paid *lobola* and became husbands. These men created relationships based on community, family and their in-laws which provided them with good stature and authority in the community. Therefore it can be argued that pre-colonial notions of masculinity were defined by ritual, symbolism and communalism which were the main social influences. The discourse of physical and social power, authority and economic independence were also predominant characterising factors of masculinity in pre-colonial Shona tradition. Firstly "older men have a role in holding power over younger men and thus in defining manhood in Africa," this is seen by their responsibility to 'overseers' the marital union and those in charge of negotiating *lobola* (Baker, Ricardo; 2005). This meant that masculinity was also defined by age which gave different men power and authority in society. The fathers of both the bride and the groom also showed their ability to economically provide through the ritual exchange of cattle (Mangena; Ndlovu; 2013; 475). Therefore constructions of masculinity were embedded in a man's role as the protector and provider. In Brown, Sorrell and Raffaelli (2005) research on constructions of masculinity and sexuality in Namibia, they discuss how their research participants placed a particular link between having many wives and children as a symbol of wealth in society. Interestingly this was a common view among the female and male participants. One of their participants was quoted as saying "if you had many wives, many children will come your way, that is most important and that is how you became a man" (Brown, Sorrell; Raffaelli; 2005; 590).

In contemporary society, both men and women have come to be affected by changes in industrialisation, political and economic structures as well as new definitions of community and changing socio-economic status. "This is mainly so because the position of men in the process is a complex and an influential one. They do the 'paying' and the 'charging'. Both activities undertaken by men serve to show the difficult positions that women find themselves in. Men determine women's

'price' for *lobola* factoring in costs like education, clothing, food, medication and other expenses that parents would have spent on their daughter" (Mangena; Ndlovu; 2013; 477). During the colonial period, ideal masculinity and manhood became less about socio-economic factors attached to land and the community and became more about financial independence as men began to work in mines and on farms to earn cash. Baker and Ricardo argue that as these shifts took place, "the key requirement to attain manhood in Africa is achieving some level of financial independence, employment or income, and subsequently starting a family" (Baker, Ricardo; 2005; V). Furthermore the aspect of ritual became less important as men began to cohabit and have children with women who they had not paid *lobola* for. Capitalism came with the introduction of education, wage labour and financial freedom which redefined society which was now defined by the successful individual and less about the success of the man in relation to his community (Nkosi; 2011; 5). "The values promoted by capitalism seem to correlate with Western values of individualism and independence where the individual is solely responsible for their life and fulfillment. These values contrast sharply with values promoted within a collectivist culture, such as most indigenous African cultures, where the individual's actions and decisions are made in consideration of the effect on the whole group" (Mkhize, 2004). Therefore men had to negotiate this new form of social expectation which was significantly shaped by the colonial capitalist economy. Furthermore, the shift from being in control in the pre-colonial rural setting, to now being controlled by colonialists created forms of a more subordinate 'African' masculinity. Similarly post-colonial and contemporary influences began to create different forms of masculinity which had a less significant connection to cultural identities and more with other aspects such as the introduction of Christianity and economies of scale.

Furthermore the introduction of feminist's critiques of *lobola* as well as the newly found economic autonomy of women affected balances of power (Nkosi; 2011; 51). Although many still maintain traditional gender roles within the household, men are less defined by simply having children and are now characterised by social status acquired from being economically sufficient. Drawing away from the communal and equal achievements, masculinities were now defined by power struggles among men for economic gain (Nkosi; 2011; 15). However, despite the changes from pre- to post-colonial society, the ideal hegemonic masculine identity which positions the man as the head of the household and the provider is still the overarching discourse in many Southern African societies. Although ideas of successful and ideal manhood are less connected to labour and farming and more defined by

economic independence, it is still the man's role to care for his family financially. Contemporary forms of ideal masculinity in relation to the traditional practice of *lobola* and the shifts due to migration and religion is a topic I explore further with my interview participants.

From the literature review on masculinity and *lobola* I argue that there is a need for further discussion and exploration into the meaning of masculinities as engaged with *lobola* which is still under-researched. Although there is much literature on ritual and its significance to manhood, this is predominantly based on rituals such as circumcision which are central to the process of transitioning from boyhood to manhood in many Southern African cultures. However the need to negotiate with tradition and socio-economic influences on masculinity in Southern Africa requires more attention. *Lobola* is a social institution which defines gender roles, shifts identities and creates new forms of masculinities in society, which despite feminist critique; authors explored this process in relation to references to alternative, non-violent versions of manhood influenced by traditional socialization and in some cases the support for the continuous practice of *lobola*.

The great debate: Meaning of lobola; gender inequality, the law and custom

“The notion of exclusionary practice is useful to an understanding of how this was done, because culture is so easily constructed as untouchable and sacrosanct; as something which must be guarded and protected, especially from external influences and pollution; and by positioning women as the custodians of these sacred cultural texts, women themselves become trapped in an unchanging phenomenal reality which allows for their exclusion in structural, ideological and other terms” (McFadden; 2005; 66).

As discussed, *lobola* is a cultural practice that is central to the institution of marriage in many Southern African nations. Primarily it is seen as tool that cements to family ties and provides specific identities to men, women and children (Samuriwo; 2008). However, the past two decades of economic and political stress, changing 'norms' about the meaning of heterosexuality, marriage, and partnership have also affected how *lobola* is seen and practiced. In the following paragraphs I discuss

how and why *lobola* has continued to be criticised for its perpetuation of patriarchy, gender inequality and abuse on women.

The argument that some African cultural practices are based on patriarchal norms and predetermined gender roles and justify the subordination of women has led to much criticism on the system of *lobola*. There has been a vast amount of research advocating for the elimination of patriarchal practices such as *lobola* because it is seen as an oppressive practice which commodifies women and enhances the abuse by their husbands and in-laws (WLSA; 2003). Although those who advocate for and continue to uphold *lobola* as a significant practice argue that it is a system which a man shows his commitment to his bride and the union of two families, there is still much critique on the payment itself of *lobola* (Samuriwo; 2008). *Lobola* supporters argue that the understanding of *lobola* has been corrupted by colonial interpretation in which the translation or meaning behind words become misinterpreted and seen as 'wife purchase' or 'bride price' for example (Chireshe; 2010). In their research Mangena and Ndlovu argue that "the payment reduces the woman to an object of sale and hence commoditize her. Charging *lobola/roora* involves putting a price on what is charged; which in this case is, unfortunately a woman" (Mangena, Ndlovu; 2013; 477). After *lobola*, a woman is seen to 'belong' to her husband and is expected to perform certain tasks such as cooking and bearing children. Mangena and Ndlovu argue that despite the original premise that *lobola* was seen to give women status in the community, the forced expectation for her to perform and remain within subordinate barriers has become a system that 'disempowers' women. Furthermore, the payment which some argue is a symbol of commitment from the groom and his family has become manipulated for personal gain, thus "the commercialization of *lobola* has stripped it of its symbolism and reduced it to yet another way of controlling women's reproductive rights" (Mangena, Ndlovu; 2005; 477). They further argue that although men are seen to 'pay' for their bride, the woman repays this amount through services such as cleaning, sexually fulfilling her husband and having children who will belong to her husband's clan (Mangena, Ndlovu; 2005; 477).

Research by Nilsson (2004) highlights the critique that surrounds *lobola*, as some of her participants termed *lobola* as "slavery and against the constitution of South Africa" (Nilsson; 2004; 15). The fact that *lobola* is a customary law practice; most cases of abuse are dealt with traditionally by family

members or local leaders, leaving the women with little legal protection. As recorded by the online news journal AllAfrica.com, there is a “critical need for Zimbabweans to re-engage in critical debate and interrogation of *lobola* and the evolutionary role that it played in the adaptation of various roles significant to the status that women acquire and assume in society” (<http://allafrica.com/stories/201205280838>). Feminists from the Gender and Women’s Studies for Africa’s Transformation argue that there are many cases in Africa that have taken place where women seek judicial help and are disappointed at the ruling made based on African cultural beliefs (<http://www.gwsafrica.org/teaching-resources/gender-law/african-activism>). The argument is that women are left with limited choices when facing abuse from their husbands, including the fact that their families encourage these women to stay with their husbands because divorce is seen as shameful (Sadiqi; 2008). Moreover, the patriarchal discourses that inform culture leave little room for the advocacy of abused women as issues of marriage are seen as above the law and thus political interruption is unappreciated (Sadiqi; 2008).

Many authors have also begun to explore the idea that common views around marriage and heterosexuality have been affected by modern ideals and popular culture which may not necessarily place the same sacred values on peoples way of life. Mupotsa argues that one reason for this is because marriage rituals themselves have been “transformed into a consumer rite” (Mupotsa; 2014; 223). Critics argue that in modern society where many women are formally employed and assist with financial provision in the household, “women are overwhelmed by sharing the provider role in addition to their homemaker role” (Nkosi; 2011; 52).

Conclusion and research focus

Drawing from my literature review, there are a vast number of themes that have been highlighted. Theories on masculinity, heterosexuality marriage and *lobola* have significantly contributed to the development of my research ideas and exploratory focus. The purpose of my research is to discuss how men negotiate intersectional aspects of *lobola*, religion and socio-economic influences in society, arguing that “versions of manhood in Africa are socially constructed, fluid over time and in different settings, and plural” (Baker, Ricardo; 2005). Using the theory of that a version of hegemonic

masculinity creates notions of gender normativity and 'ideal' manhood that men strive to achieve, I was interested in my participants' representations of this. Literature on marriage in Southern Africa argues that any non-heterosexual form of partnership is seen as 'other' and 'improper' which writers argue is predominantly defined by traditional and religious ideologies and social rules which premise marriage around the union between a man and a woman (Pereira; 2009; 18). The fear of being ostracized and socially outcast has forced men 'perform' in certain ways and link ideas about heterosexuality to successful masculinity. Epprecht (1998) terms this "the political economy of heterosexuality" (Epprecht; 1998; 633) which is an institution that remains unquestioned and naturalised in many African societies. I use this idea to ground my interest in the concept of *lobola* within contemporary Zimbabwean men's lives as 'marrying' men.

From my literary review I further argue that research on meaning of masculinities as engaged with *lobola* is still under researched. I take into account that "in most gender analyses in Africa, the full dimensions of gender, including gender hierarchies that subjugate some groups of men, particularly young men, are seldom discussed" (Baker, Ricardo; 2005; 1). Therefore in order to contribute to the development of this topic I explore ideas about the significance of ritual in relation to manhood and marriage in Southern Africa. As highlighted by Clowes (2008) "African discourses tended to signal male adulthood through proximity to family members, through respect for age and seniority and through deference to the praxis of 'tradition'" (Clowes; 2008). I investigate how the aspect of ritual and constructions of masculinity are linked to aspects of rites of passage, power and social control which award men different status at different stages in their lives.

Finally, as the literature review suggests, there is a lack of research on the links between religious faith (Christianity, for this research) and the negotiation of masculinity, especially for men living outside Zimbabwe as Zimbabweans. My research interest is therefore to explore men's representation of their masculinities, through engagement with their self-identification of Pentecostal Christians, as men who have paid 'lobola', and as men concerned with living as Zimbabweans outside their home country. My research this engages with authors such as Ratele and Gaidzanwa who stress that the exploration of masculinities within an African context is one where issues of intersectionality will have to be taken seriously.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The following chapter outlines my methodological strategy for my research. In my Epistemology section I discuss the connections between my research practice and theories of knowledge, which highlights how I explore the idea of knowledge creation. Secondly I will locate myself as a researcher under the chapter on Positionality. In this chapter I interrogate my identity as a woman in research and how this affects my research. Narayan (1997) argues that “the project of giving an account of one’s self – of one’s specific location as speaker and thinker; of the reasons, feelings, and anxieties that texture one’s position on an issue, of the values that inform one’s considered judgment of things’ and to be self-aware during research is an inherent good” (Narayan; 1997; 9). Therefore it is essential as a researcher to explore these issues of positionality and how it locates one as a researcher and as a writer, as well as how this affects my process of knowledge creation. Thirdly I outline my method and discuss how I selected my research participants, how I conducted my interviews as well as an overview of how I structured the analysis of the empirical data. It is important to plan the method as this will determine the final research product (Carter, Little; 2007; 1325). Finally I discuss the challenges and limitations I encountered when conducting my research. It is important to highlight these in order to possibly generate options to negotiate these limitations and create strong research during my interview and research process.

For the purpose of developing data for my research I will make use of a qualitative methodology which Biber and Leavy highlight is more suited to questions where one is attempting to investigate lived experiences (Biber, Leavy; 2006; 4). This includes interpreting data in terms of themes as a process of searching for meaning. It is important to note that finding one ‘ultimate truth’ within this research is not possible considering that different individuals may hold different meanings and experiences, which create particularly unique meanings of the subject (Carter; Little; 2007; 1319). Qualitative research is mainly concerned with meaning and is interested in the experiences of people and how they negotiate these situations (Willing; 2001; 9). Carter and Little highlight that “qualitative data collection methods include observation, interviews, focus groups, collection of extant texts, elicitation of texts and the creation or collection of images” (Carter; Little; 2007; 1320).

Leduc also highlights that qualitative tools are useful in helping us understand 'how' and 'why,' therefore giving a voice to people and "recognising that both men and women from any socioeconomic background have valuable experiences and knowledge" (Leduc; 2009; 4). However, similar to Bennett and Pereira, I am also aware that although many authors have discussed issues around the "meanings of research and stimulate their interlocutors into questions about reflexivity, the eradication of stereotypic lenses and the power of gender analysis. What very few of them do, however, is write at length about the concrete processes of methodologies—how to imagine a 'field' (in an African context)...how to work across languages, how to protect, respect and be accountable to those with whom we work" (Bennett; Pereira; 2013; 10).

Epistemology

"Engendering research does not change the scope of the research; it provides new perspectives, raises new questions, and uses new analysis tools to create a more complete picture of the problem" (Leduc; 2009; 2)

Willing (2001) states that "epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge which attempts to provide answers to the question of 'how' and 'what' can we know" (Willig; 2001; 2). In order to do this, a researcher has to think critically about how valid and how reliable this knowledge is and thereafter select an epistemological position. Furthermore, thinking about epistemology is important in order to develop clear goals and objectives to research and justify the knowledge created. Therefore an epistemology provides a connection between research practice and theories of knowledge as it answers questions about who can be the knower (Carter; Little; 2007; 1324). Biber and Leavy argue that knowledge construction is also "about the ongoing interplay between theory and method, researcher and researched" (Biber; Leavy; 5; 2006).

When debating which epistemological lens to use, it is important to highlight the difference between African feminist epistemology and northern feminist epistemology ideas. Afro-centric feminists like Patricia Hill Collins argue that "first, knowledge claims are evaluated by a community of experts whose members represent the standpoints of the groups from which they originate" (Collins; 1990; 3).

For Collins, this meant that the historical background and location of research has a significant effect on knowledge creation and scholarly communities that challenge basic beliefs that are held in the culture at large will be deemed less credible than those that support the popular perspectives. The argument held by Smith and Hill-Collins is that “where you are located structures your identity and livelihood” (Collins; 1990; 3). My research aims to give a voice to those whose accounts have not been researched in depth, in this case being Christian men who have married through *lobola*. Therefore, one challenge of my research when selecting an epistemological perspective was to use one that assisted me with bringing men’s realities and experiences to the forefront without making it an andocentric research project.

Although most feminist debates focus on discussing women and women’s lived experiences, my aim is to employ a similar afrocentric feminist epistemology to Hill-Collins by discussing knowledge’s of the dynamics of gender with a focus on masculinity. Bennett and Pereira (2013) have explored this idea of conducting research in relation to gender and sexualities in an African context and argue that “designing research processes, however, needs more than the recognition of the politics of gendered knowledges, and more, too, than the illumination of what ‘feminist eyes’ may bring to the environment” (Bennett; Pereira; 2013; 3). Therefore in order to transform social knowledge and recognize the agency of women and men requires the acknowledging of structures and processes that are gendered (Pereira; 2002; 2). Although the aim of my research is to understand my participants’ experiences, I am aware that as a researcher, the interview platform only provides me with the ability to generate knowledge based on the participants’ representations of their experience.

Bennett and Pereira interrogate how new researchers conduct research that involves gendered and sexual identities, what it means to ask questions on intimacy and privacy, and how this affects our access to research processes (Bennett; Pereira; 2013; 3). Leduc (2009) describes this as conducting gender sensitive research which “is not research on women or on gender relationships; it is research that takes into account gender as a significant variable in environmental and development studies” (Leduc; 2009; 1). Although most feminist research places women at the centre of the study, I employ a gendered lens which interrogates men’s experiences in relation to the intersection of religion, culture and marriage. Additionally, employing a gender sensitive methodology in my research “not only takes into account gender differences in the conceptual and analytical framework, it also uses

methods and tools that are participatory, respectful, and accountable” (Leduc; 2009; 3). Leduc argues that employing these gendered epistemological hypotheses must be based on actual realities and not about assumptions of gender roles. Therefore one should avoid making use of prejudices about men and women or placing more value on either women’s work or men’s work (Leduc; 2009; 3).

Similar to the feminist epistemologists such as Dorothy Smith who argue that “knowledge claims are always socially situated”, I employ a thematic analysis tool to discuss how many social and economic issues about cultural rights; national laws and marriage are seen as male-centered and in many cases perpetuate these social inequalities (Harding; 1993, 54). In my previous research I explored ideas about *lobola* in relation to women’s rights and I argued that from a cultural perspective and perhaps from a legal perspective, issues about rights within marriage had not questioned matters of social hierarchy, women’s losses and their ability to exercise power and agency especially in relation to *lobola* and marriage.

Ramazanoglu and Holland argue that it is important to remain aware of issues of power linked to feminist methodology “since the power to produce is not equally open to all” (Ramazanoglu; Holland; 2002; 11). Therefore, as a feminist researcher it is always important to question who has the power and how this power is implicated when producing knowledge. Commonly, the social and power relations discussed in relation to *lobola* are mainly on the basis of women and women’s losses. My research contributes to illuminating the voice of men as key participants in the process. Kimberly Crenshaw (1989) argued that intersectionality had to be taken seriously, because “one’s way of knowing is affected by one’s class, gender, and racial background” (Jiang; 2005; 56). In my thesis I discuss how the intersectionality of culture, economic environments and religion affect how Zimbabwean men negotiate their masculine identity. Issues of power, agency, social expectation and family control affect the choices made by these men when deciding how and what it means to marry in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Therefore, I adopt a feminist lens that critically analyses gender and brings men’s lived experiences to the foreground, allowing their experiences to contribute to a better understanding of research on ‘African masculinities.’

Positionality

Leduc argues that it is important to acknowledge our own bias when conducting research. Primarily, “the position of the researcher, their interests, and values affect how and what research topics are chosen, who they work with, and the perspective and method of research” (Leduc; 2009; 4). As a researcher I have a particular interest in uncovering knowledge about ‘African masculinities’ and how these intersect with ideas about heterosexuality, marriage and religion. The cultural process of *lobola* is both interesting and controversial especially when it comes to the study of the process of marriage in Shona tradition. As a young unmarried woman who spent most of her youth in Zimbabwe, it is of particular interest for me to firstly examine the intersection between religious values, laws and social views that affect those who still uphold the cultural practice of *lobola* and why. My ideas on the marriage, both traditional and within the church have also been greatly influenced by my education, which has been in a variety of international settings and thus has led me to question some aspects of cultural practices. However my background and social location present me with a complex power position with my research topic itself, as well as with the candidates I interviewed.

The politics of ‘identity’

“Our identities are not given or reducible to our origins, skin colour, or material locations. Our identities or positions are the product of struggle and they represent an achieved not as an ascribed trait” (Mbilinyi; 1992; 121).

Ramazanoglu and Holland argue that “feminists’ approaches to methodology have to tackle the problem of how to take account of experience when researchers are all personally and variably engaged, experienced and situated in social relations” (Ramazanoglu; Holland; 2002; 14). Identifying as a Tanzanian researcher, exploring lived experiences of Zimbabwean men who live in Cape Town has provided me both with the platform to view the process of *lobola* as an ‘outsider.’ However this occasionally created a challenge to my research and my participants due to differences in gender, language and cultural background. Primarily, as a researcher I reflect on my position and identity in order to allow the voices of my participants to be adequately reflected in my research. Sultana (2007)

describes reflexivity in research as a “reflection on self, process, and representation, and critically examining power relations and politics in the research process and researcher accountability in data collection and interpretation” (Sultana; 2007; 375). Firstly, as a Tanzanian conducting my research in English, Bennett (2003) highlights that it is important to take the “difficulties of language” seriously and how these affect the information that will be uncovered (Bennett; 2003). Furthermore, the idea of language and peoples experiences especially in Africa, are further affected by the aspect of colonialism and African customs. Here Bennett points out how these aspects have been embedded into our languages, education and social and political power. Therefore, it was important for me to be aware of the words I am using when conducting interviews, how these questions were structured, and how I negotiated the issues of power with my research participants.

Limitations

Politics of identity and its limitations

The issues of language and cultural differences poses as a challenge when exploring this research further through interviews because some words used may not be easily translated from Shona into English, which is the language I used for my interviews and research. Words such as *lobola* itself have been interpreted in different ways which in some cases negate the idea of *lobola*. My candidates referred to other ritual processes which I had to attempt to translate into English and correctly reflect the meaning of their arguments. The article by Undie (2007) has also emphasized the importance of culture and its bearing on research. She notes how a researcher can become selective on the research material due to personal ties. She states that “every researcher, as a culture bearer, encounters problems in the course of research” and this leads to one overlooking information from the interview by omitting certain information (Undie; 2007). As mentioned above, I had to negotiate the different social and cultural influences as a Tanzanian researcher in Cape Town in order to allow my participants ideas to be clearly presented. This meant being open minded to understand that there are numerous social influences that affect the decisions made by my participants when representing their choices on marriage and living as men in Cape Town. In addition, Sultana (2007) argues that “conducting international fieldwork involves being attentive to histories of colonialism, development,

globalization and local realities, to avoid exploitative research or perpetuation of relations of domination and control” (Sultana; 2007; 375).

Being a woman within research, the issue of gender difference sometimes posed as a challenge which I had to negotiate. Because I interviewed married Zimbabwean men, from the church of which I am a member, issues of respect and requesting ‘private’ interview processes with married men were complicated. In order to avoid offending participants, I had to request the interview by discussing my ideas with my participants and their wives. Another power struggle was that in previous discussions my participants aimed to ‘teach’ me about the cultural process of *lobola* as opposed to sharing their actual lived experiences, which was perhaps may because of my identity as an unmarried young woman, and also because I do not share a similar cultural background with my interview participants. Leduc argues that “even the researcher’s position in society may influence the way in which the research is conducted, how the information is analysed, and how the results are interpreted” (Leduc; 2009; 4). When reflecting on her research in Bangladesh, Sultana concluded “that ethical research is produced through negotiated spaces and practices of reflexivity that is critical about issues of positionality and power relations at multiple scales” (Sultana; 2007; 375). She further emphasises that although most feminist researchers aim to conduct research from a perspective of non-hierarchical relationships with interview participants, therefore close attention has to be paid to research questions and data collection that may be embedded in unequal power relations between researcher and participants. The process of interviewing my ‘elders’ within a cultural setting where age commands respect required an element of reverence which impacted how and the types of questions I asked, and I further assume this affected how my older participants framed some of their responses. However, the ‘reverse’ power relations created by my identity as a woman within research coming from an ‘academic’ background sometimes led participants to want to provide me with ‘academic’ responses in which case I would sometimes ask probing questions.

Another positional challenge therefore was to create conversations with my participants that would allow my interview participants to share their personal experiences as opposed to their ideas about how *lobola* ‘should’ be practised. I had to be aware of how I asked the questions in order not to lead my participants, but instead provide them with a platform to openly discuss their experiences.

Being a member of the same church attended by my interview participants has offered an advantage because I managed to find participants for my research through simply approaching some men within my church community; however being an 'insider' was a challenge as I had to be cautious of questions I asked to avoid asking questions that would lead to discomfort with my participants. Questions on how they met their wives and when they got married and household dynamics on the roles as a man in the household had to be asked strategically in order to protect their dignity. Fortunately most participants were forthcoming with their responses and answered each question, some more in detail than others however. For many, marriage is a private affair which could have caused some participants to be less forthcoming with intimate information, especially to an unmarried young woman in their same church community. Furthermore, I had to remain conscious of the beliefs that I hold and the beliefs that my male participants hold as part of the Church, but also as Africans within this complex space of gender, culture and religion. In this regard, I agree with Leduc that my positionality informed my research in that I had to strategically plan the interview stage in order to allow my participants to be comfortable and forthcoming with information, especially information that would be extremely relevant and beneficial for my research focus.

Using my cultural background as a Tanzanian who grew up in Zimbabwe allowed me the platform to have inside knowledge about the practice of *lobola* and marriage in Zimbabwe without my own opinions hindering or guiding the explanations I received from my interview participants. Although, drawing from my own personal experiences and knowledge's as a young African woman, I attempted to contribute my own insight to the following research, especially when phrasing questions. The one complication here is "what constitutes the 'field' versus 'home' is a problematic distinction", as conducting field work within a familiar space of my church and with the Shona culture where I grew up was by no means returning 'home' (Sultana; 2007; 377). Therefore, although I find myself located in a familiar space with my participants from a religious and historical background, I am aware of that there are 'material' and 'symbolic' differences perhaps because of my educational and cultural background. The need to avoid being 'othered' meant I had to make a concerted effort to 'blend in' with my participants by engaging with Shona terms occasionally. However, although I have a partial access to similar experiences and language with my participants this still does not make me an 'insider.' Therefore I find myself being an insider and outsider simultaneously. It is this ongoing

negotiation that helped me in forming a great and extensive pool of knowledge production and research work.

Further limitations and expectations

Employing a qualitative methodology is a method that is best suited for the aims of my study and helped me gather the required information from my participants. However, from previous experience conducting research, I was aware that there are limitations to every method, and many issues that may arise from involving research participants. When conducting interviews, Leduc highlights that it is important to employ research tools that are not seen as threatening especially when questioning private issues about family or the community (Leduc; 2003; 3).

When approaching this topic, I had to also negotiate my ideas and assumptions about *lobola* and masculinity, and reviewed how these ideas might possibly affect my research. I had to employ a post-positivist view which recognizes that researchers cannot be absolutely positive about their knowledge and claims (Merrick; 1999; 23). I therefore needed to structure questions that will not lead my participants into affirming my ideas, but allow for the conversations to possibly bring about new information on the topic. This limited flexibility was a disadvantage as it gives the researcher “little room for unanticipated discoveries” (Breakwell, Hammond; Fife-Schaw; 1995). However, despite the in-depth literature review on the topic as well as the number of interviews I conducted, one limitation was that my conclusions will not be an overall reflection of the thoughts of all Zimbabwean men. Moreover the interview process sometimes made some of the participants feel uneasy about how to answer questions, some of which they had never been asked before. Therefore acquiring information was sometimes a challenge. One way of approaching and tackling this was to ask other follow up questions which were not on my list in order to probe further. Furthermore, because my participants are working men with other commitments, I had to reschedule some interviews for other more suitable dates.

Research Ethics

Anderson and Jack (1991) explain how research ethics is about “ensuring our work meets the highest standards of scholarly integrity and accountability” by engaging with our research participants as opposed to objectifying them (Anderson, Jack; 1991). Research ethics prioritise the protection of participants, especially where sensitive information is shared. This includes protecting the dignity of participants who would have shared ‘confidential’ information. In light of this understanding, the aims and purpose of the interview material was strictly for academic research and this was explained to each interview participant verbally and in written format. Sultana argues that being reflexive as a researcher “is important in situating the research and knowledge production so that ethical commitments can be maintained,” therefore understanding my position and how this affects my relationship with my participants was significant when deciding on procedures to protect my participants and produce ethical work (Sultana; 2007; 376). This includes protecting the dignity of participants who would have shared ‘confidential’ information. For example, my research questions centered on families, religious beliefs and national history, meaning my participants had to share private information and my duty as a researcher was to make sure they are protected and interpreted appropriately. Mama (2011) argues that “activist research ethic demands that we not only defy the academic canon by *not* maintaining distance, but actually go a great deal further, to actively relate to and engage with our ‘research subjects’ and explore ways of joining them and supporting their struggles” (Mama; 2011; 16). This once again includes employing a degree of self-awareness and reflexivity.

My positionality as a ‘foreign’ female researcher in this context meant that I had to negotiate these political connections and political disconnections to my research participants in order to fairly portray their possibly sensitive information. I also had to be concerned with the ‘politics of judgment’ which was occasionally was a concern for my participants due to my questions on gender identities, their personal process of *lobola* and marriage. Sharing their family and marital information with me meant I had to be cautious about how I phrased my questions and presented the research data. For that reason I made use of alias names for my participants in order to protect their identities. Furthermore,

in order to protect the dignity of the church and its members, I chose not to name the church in which I am conducting the research.

When selecting my candidates for the research, I approached men (and their wives) in my church community, some of whom I am familiar with and explained my research topic and my reason for wanting them to participate. Thereafter I provided them with a detailed consent form that explained my research interest again and how I planned to make use of the information they would have shared. Subject to acquiring their consent, I then made use of the information shared in the interviews to create my analysis. I explained to my participants that upon completion they had access to my research 'findings'. Furthermore, I made it my responsibility to design research that did not place the participants in a vulnerable situation by conducting the interviews in a place that was familiar to them, such as their homes which I found helped alleviate feelings of vulnerability.

Gibson and Brown (2009) argue that "the protection of data is a key issue in social research" (Gibson, Brown; 2009; 62). Therefore I stored the transcripts under a password protected file and the recordings of my interviews were password protected and only used for the purposes of my research. Additionally it was important to think about my plans for the data after my research was complete, as I might need to access the data for clarity or to develop further research. The debate on whether to destroy the data or consider storing it safely for future use is one that Gibson and Brown argue is part of "the complexity of issues that researchers face when reflecting on the ethical dimensions of their work" (Gibson, Brown; 2009; 62). In light of this I have stored my research under password protection in case I decide to develop my research further.

Method

A method can be defined as "techniques for gathering evidence, which include listening to informants, examining behaviour or examining historical records" (Harding; 1987; 2). Cater and Little further argue that epistemology is made visible through method and measures research quality (Cater; Little; 2007; 1316). Willig also discusses the value of using empiricism as a methodological tool which is based on the premise that our knowledge of the world must be derived from the facts of experience which then

give rise to more complex ideas and theories. He argues that research methods provide ways of approaching and possibly answering our research questions. Therefore, research methods can be described as “the way to the goal” (Willig; 2001; 3). As a researcher it is therefore my aim to describe, explain and justify the methods of research chosen (Cater; Little; 2007; 1318). Based on this method of research, I formulated a research focus which is centralized around the theory of *lobola* and how this affects Christian men who have chosen to practise it and developed an interview schedule which would allow me to hear participants in as rich a way as possible.

Primary and secondary sources

“Interviewing provides an opportunity for combining practical, analytical and interpretive approaches to media.” (Jensen, Jankowski; 1991)

In order to develop my qualitative research tool I made use of both primary and secondary sources. The material I researched for my literature review provided me with secondary sources and a platform for my research purpose. However, the material I used for my research shall come from both my literary and empirical data (interviews). In the interview process I investigated what it means to marry in Zimbabwe for my participants and how this is upheld by them as Christian men. Frey and Osishi (1995) define interviews as “a purposeful conversation in which one person asks prepared questions and another answers them” (Frey; Osishi, 1995). This is helpful because participants offer their open and opinions and experiences. I decided that it would be more useful to conduct one-on-one interviews as opposed to focus groups for my research because as mentioned, the topic of marriage, religion and masculinity is one that many people find sacred and private. I envisaged that one-on-one interviews further helped my participants to be comfortable to freely share their information without the fear of judgment or disagreement with other men who may have different ideas.

Participants

The 15 participants were chosen because of their position at an intersection. They are married Zimbabwean men who identify as Christian. They are simultaneously men who are currently living outside Zimbabwe, because of economic reasons, and have temporarily settled in Cape Town, South Africa. These men are placed at a specific site of tension where they have had to negotiate their identity as men who are from a traditional background but also had to also uphold their values as Christians. This experience is a source of knowledge that I engaged with for my research focus to analyse how these men and have and continue to negotiate with these different identities.

It was important to select candidates who married through the process of *lobola* but identify as 'Christian.' I was not particular about candidates who married both through *lobola* and within the church, because I wanted to investigate why and if some chose both or chose one way of marriage. I knew some of my participants for a few years making them the first ones I approached with the proposal to interview them. These participants had been willing to share their views on *lobola* in previous general conversations; however I was aware that a formal interview setting with personal questions could potentially trigger different responses from my participants, and they might engage differently when having to share personal information about family and marriage and their religious beliefs. I also asked my participants to refer me to people they knew who might have been interested in taking part in my research.

The ideal sample was debated with a particular focus in noting the most suitable number to provide sufficient information for the study as well as to allow me as researcher prolonged engagement with the participants. It was important to consider a sample small enough to provide me with rich data as a researcher, but also a sample group large enough to allow for diverse perspectives and opinions (Kuzel; 1992).

Breakdown of sample by age group:

Age Groups	40-50	30-40	20-30
No. of participants	1	11	3

In my interview process, I selected overarching themes that provided me with the desired information related to being gendered and being a man according to my male participants. The initial interview contained forty semi-structured questions that were divided into four main thematic categories which covered a range of topics from the participant's background, to their current living situation as well as their religious and cultural beliefs. My first thematic category focused on the 'Participants Background', where I asked questions about the participant's upbringing, where they went to school, questions about their family and their current life in Cape Town. From this I understood how the participant's background shaped and changed their ideas about masculinity, success, family building and religion. My second theme was "The story of marriage" which covered questions on participant's process of both cultural and church marriage. I aimed to find out which belief held more significance to building the participant's identity, and what their thoughts and experiences were both in the cultural marriage as well as the 'white wedding.' I asked questions about their wives, their marriage plans and experiences for the marriage process, discussing whether they got advice from Pastors or family about marriage. From this I developed material on thoughts about marriage, whether there are gendered differences in the home as well as throughout the experience of being a Christian and being a Shona man.

My third theme discussed the topic *lobola* in a more in-depth way. Here I asked questions on their experience of paying *lobola*, who was expected to pay and how they would negotiate if they were not able to afford *lobola*. This uncovered discourses about masculinity, marriage, culture and gender normativity embedded in *lobola*. Arguing that *lobola* is a process that is defined by economic exchanges, I further discuss the theme around 'Political and economic shifts.' As my participants are from Zimbabwe, I interrogate issues of changing economic and political climates and how this has affected them, their view of manhood and ideas on the practice of *lobola*. Finally, I presented my participants with scenarios to create a deeper conversation on their opinions of marriage, masculinity and *lobola*. The above interview topics are broad guiding themes which helped me create a more in-depth analysis of my material upon completion of my interviews. Meintjes-Moakes (2012) argues that "because a context of discursive control shapes the accounts that (interviewees) give, themes of power, positionality and the context in which interviews are conducted must be acknowledged, accounted for and analysed as part of the research process" (Meintjes-Moakes; 2012; 67).

Transcribing data

“Transcription is translation, and all transitions are partial; the partiality in the case of research derives from the theoretical perspective of the research. Transcriptions are never value free; they are theory laden” (Kress et al; 2005; 10)

I created a few interview questions and continued to build more questions throughout my literature review process as I continued to have more questions I wanted to explore. I conducted a pilot interview in order to note whether my questions provided me with the desired information or whether I should have changed my questions or ask them differently. Subsequently I analysed the responses of my initial interview after transcribing. By employing a positivist view of transcription, I simply transcribed words from spoken into written. Gibson and Brown (2009) define transcribing as “the process of rendering data into a new representational form. Through transcription, researchers represent or better still re-present the data that they have gathered (Gibson, Brown; 2009; 109). In my interview it is important to note that I still had to negotiate the use of language, and the use of certain words. For example, the word Christian and religion is quite complex to use because there is no single Christian identity, even though these men all belong to the same church community. The term Christian is interesting because it is a reflection of many denominations within the Christian religion and therefore my research is simply a small reflection of the ideas of some men within my church community. Furthermore how they view themselves as Christians and their beliefs occasionally differed depending on their backgrounds and upbringing. I find this was beneficial for my research because I intended on exploring a rich set of diverse views for my participants.

Analysis of data

“When working with data, then, researchers do so with these specified interests, questions and concerns in mind, trying to answer the questions and deal with problems that they will have posed while designing and collecting that data” (Gibson, Brown; 2009; 64).

Mason (2002) argues that qualitative research is “characteristically exploratory, fluid and flexible, data driven and context-sensitive,” therefore she argues that it would be impossible to write an entire ‘advanced blueprint’ for research (Mason; 2002; 24). However, despite this it is important to create a research design in order to guide the research and analysis process, as well as to turn my data into ‘evidence’. Similar to Mason’s argument my analysis section allowed me to explore my data and create themes and findings which developed from the interview process. The significance of contextualising my data into themes was to capture important aspects from the participant data especially in relation to the overall research question (Meintjes-Moakes; 2012; 78). Furthermore a thematic analysis allows the researcher to organize and describe the data set in rich detail. Braun and Clarke argue that this is important in order to create links within our data in order to match what the researcher wants to know (Braun, Clarke; 2006; 80). The aim of creating knowledge is to present ‘valid’ research findings. However Biber and Leavy (2006) argue that “if the perspective of most qualitative research is that social reality is ‘socially constructed’ then using the concept of ‘validity’ as ‘correspondence’ with the ‘objective’ reality will not work” (Biber, Leavy; 2006; 62). Therefore, to create ‘valid’ research meant presenting my findings as a researcher to competing claims and interpretations and providing the reader with strong arguments for my particular knowledge claim (Kvale; 1996; 240). As the ‘inquirer’ in my study, my analysis stage involved deciding how to create arguments and ask specific questions in order to persuade my audience that the findings of the inquiry are worth paying attention to and worth taking account of (Biber, Leavy; 2006; 66). However, one challenge I found with this content analysis tool is that it is subject to misinterpretation therefore I had to be attentive and mindful both when collecting data, transcribing the data as well as analysing it to create my arguments during the analysis stage (Meintjes-Moakes; 2012; 77).

Mason argues that it is especially important to anticipate the data analysis process because this is central to strategic issues within research and how these strategies will ultimately define the results of the research (Mason; 2002; 37). Although I draw certain arguments from my literature review, I make use of key findings from my interviews in order to “provide alternative theoretical explanations” for my given findings and “attempting to critically examine the relative strengths and weakness” of my argument (Kvale; 1996; 242). I firstly contextualised my data in terms of core ideas and themes which developed from my literature review and interview processes. The themes were mainly a reflection of

key words and arguments presented by participants, which were aimed at bringing about 'new knowledge' to this area of study. I employed both an essentialist and constructionist method which reported on experiences, meanings and the reality of my participants as well as examined ways in which participants make meaning of their experiences (Braun, Clarke; 2006; 82). The interviews and themes developed helped me create a platform for a broader analysis of African masculinities placed in a backdrop of *lobola*, religion as well as political and economic shifts. This meant making use of an inductive process of reviewing participant data in order to develop themes which emerge (Braun, Clarke; 83). Leduc (2009) argues that "how information is collected and analysed and who is collecting it is important because it influences the quality, authenticity, and value of the information itself" (Leduc; 2009; 3). Although interviews are important for researchers to engage with their research, "researchers cannot rely unproblematically on interview data as a transparent window on life beyond the interview" (Meintjes-Moakes; 2012; 67).

In their research Gilligan et al (2003) offer guidelines to the analysis process which is applied across methods of my qualitative analysis. The process of 'listening' is "centered on a set of basic questions...and involves telling stories about relationships in different societal and cultural frameworks" (Gilligan et al; 2003; 159). Therefore the goal of my analysis was to create the big picture of my subject through thorough and thoughtful observation of my material. This involves actually listening to the stories being told and generating knowledge "based on participants own, unique experiences, grounded in the actual data" (Meintjes-Moakes; 2012; 76).

Conclusion

Willig (2012) argues that there are some ethical challenges within the process of interpreting people's words and actions mainly because this involves issues of power which shape what comes to be known about another person's experience. Furthermore, the data interpretation tool "involves a process of transformation as the interpreter digests and metabolizes the material that they are trying to make sense of" (Willig; 2012; 45). Through my research design, I explored the experiences of Zimbabwean men currently living in South Africa and try and make meaning of their experiences of being gendered both in relation to culture and religion. In my attempt to produce 'valid' research within this field, I employed analytical tools that I helped me to "discern how masculinity is reliant on other

subject positions such as race, age, ethnicity, sexuality, class and caste for its hold on power” (De Mel et al; 2004; 21).

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In order to analyse my data I used a thematic analysis to understand representations of the experiences of the Zimbabwean men who participated in my interviews. My interest was in exploring their engagement with *lobola* as a possible source of tension in their negotiation of Shona masculinity, and as the literature review suggests such tensions could have emerged from several sources: their religious affiliation, their status as immigrants, and other possible influences. In the following two sections I present and discuss the material, in order to illuminate participants' ideas on representing gender normativities as well as the complexity of participants' engagement with sustaining "masculinity". In section one, I analyse participants' representations of masculinities, with a particular interest in their discursive approach to gender normativities. This includes thematic subdivisions which discuss how ideas of masculinity are embedded in language and space as well as affected by issues of economic migration and their relationship to women. In the next section I deepen exploration of their approach to include their representations of religious influence and of marriage and marriagability. Here I discuss participants' understanding of religion and how this has shaped ideas on gender normativity, masculinity and marriage. My analysis then moves to the heart of my analytic interest which is on their representation of *lobola*, and their experiences with the processes of *lobola* in their own lives as 'men.'

Performing gender: Negotiating tensions between religious and cultural spaces

"Uhhhh well, from my family side the "right way to be a boy" had more to do with chores that one undertook at home or in the rural areas when we visited for example. So for us it also had more to do with bravery and being adventurous. Especially when we went to the rural areas... boys would sit outside by the fire with the elder men while the girls would be in the kitchen with the women. Actually a popular saying that comes to mind that "murume haachemi" should one gets hurt. And the boys would do chores like cutting firewood...uh herding the cattle, milking cows, fixing odds and ends around the house...." (HD)

From analyzing the data presented by my interview participants, the dichotomization between “boys” and “girls” was constant throughout the data and expressed through several forms. When reflecting on their childhood experiences and lessons about gender and these dichotomies between boys and girls, there were many points of consensus between the participants as well as some points of debate in terms of ideas of manhood and womanhood. For some participants, their recollection about how they learned about gendered differences was based on their observation of social and household interactions between men and women. According to participants, and perhaps predictably, they spoke of their consciousness of themselves as “boys” as rooted in multiple and overlapping zones of experience: language, role differentiation, orientations towards “girls” and “women”, embodiment and family/household dynamics. However it was interesting to note that these overlapping experiences were reflected by participants in different ways although they base their gendered “lessons” on similar institutional backgrounds such as schools parental guidance and family dynamics with other boys and girls. Some participants however, did not recall their understanding of these gendered dichotomies as actual lessons but instead explained that it is a natural course of socialization. However upon further discussion the same participants reveal numerous ideas about normative gender roles they witnessed within their households and family setups.

Discerning dichotomies

Most of the literary material presented on the exploration of religion and cultural beliefs and how these have shaped ideas about masculinity, highlight many areas of tension and contrast. The material below will analytically present ideas about gender normativities and masculinity as presented by my participants’ discussions about spaces in which they have created ideas about gendered dichotomies. Each subsection will reflect separate areas in which these men have drawn ideas about gender and how they continue to shape these ideas. The first subtheme discusses the ‘role of language’ and how ideas are created from the use of words embedded either in vernacular and English sayings; these popular sayings shaped participants ideas about the roles assumed by boys and girls in society. The second subsection shall explore how labour relations and institutions such as schools have shaped knowledge and expected gender performativities. I shall then explore ideas around bodies and space

and how participants have used ideas about the physical body to explain ideas about gender dichotomies.

Locating gender in language and the meaning of strength

“Yes, when growing up I was always told that men don’t do this, real men do that- ‘boys don’t cry’....Boys were said to be stronger characters than girls, people who protect the females around them” (TW)

“...boys should grow to be big and strong and girls should look pretty...” (P)

“To be honest, I don’t remember any such lectures. I was just a usual boy who liked sports. I probably took most of my guidance from how I saw my parents got about their business” (ST).

Hogan (2004) argues that “while language may vary across culture and change over time, it is constant in its ability to maintain power dynamics among groups of people. If we acknowledge that gender is indeed a power structure, then we must be mindful of the language that we use when we talk about gender” (Hogan; 2004; 10). The process of analysing the data presented by my participants illuminated various aspects about language and the major role it has played in creating ideas and defining spaces around gender. Aspects of power and physical strength were highlighted mainly sayings (Shona and English) around the expectations of boys and girls and how these have come to shape gender dichotomization.

The popular teachings my participants highlighted were attributed to sayings they had heard over the years and lessons they attribute to their parents. For most participants, the role of language continuously shaped their ideas about the gendering process and what it means to be a man in their adult life. Interestingly, the gendering process can also be seen as something embedded in their Shona culture, as the sentences they recall about being a boy were located within the Shona language. The saying “vakomana havachemi” (boys don’t cry) was a reflection of the expectation of the type of character and strength expected of boys which subsequently highlighted a common idea about the differences between boys and girls. Furthermore, for many participants, the difference

between men and women was usually discussed in terms of physical differences, where men are seen as strong and protective, where women were gendered as in that need of protection. Participant **P**; **T1** and participant **T2** all agreed with **TW** in terms of their view of men as being physically stronger than women. Although my participants live in an era where the phrase “non-sexist” exists as part of their religious and modern social surroundings, many still discuss ideas about gender normativity in relation to old traditional sayings about men and women’s characteristics. For them, their view on gender was based on a set of uncontested ideologies. Furthermore, despite the influences of modernity and religion, ideas about gender normativity and ideal masculinity remain rather unambiguous, especially with regards to performativity within the household.

Participant **ST** says “I was a usual boy who liked sports” reflecting how ideas about gender normativity have been embedded in his upbringing to the extent that liking sports was the expectation as a boy growing up. Hogan (2004) argues that language is a tool. As such we believe that speech is performative- it does things. Words invite, exclude, recognize or erase, empower or intimidate, examine or assume. In terms of the language used by my participants, there seems to be much assumption about boy-hood and how the usual boy should act, and this has shaped social ideas about gender performativity.

“Definitely!! I was always told what it means to be a boy. Things like “vakomana havacheme” (Boys don’t cry), ‘you must take care of your sisters because that’s a brothers job’, ‘you must be strong’, “vasikana vanofanira kugara mukitchen” (girls must stay in the kitchen). There were just so many things that dictated the way I acted as a boy growing up in Zim especially...” (V)

“Performativity is understood as a regularized repetition of norms through social, cultural, verbal and bodily acts. Gender norms are constantly negotiated by social actors with conflicting interests, through an in-vocation of “tradition” or in the name of the “modern”, thus creating a mutually constitutive spatial framework” (Merian, Tagore; 2015). What was interesting is the language used by participants reflected the lessons they drew about what a man “should” be as opposed to stating their idea of what men are. For example, participant **TW** says that men ought to be strong, as opposed to saying men

'are' strong. Their use of modals (should, ought, must) demonstrates the gendering process in which they sometimes embodied masculine characteristics which were more performative than realistic due to social and cultural expectations. For example participant **V** mentions that he knows as a man "you must be strong", and therefore the idea of strength is one that most of the participants had to embody to conform to ideas of what a real man ought to be.

Although the word 'strong' can have a range of meanings both in relation to a person's physical build or a person's character, the participants who made reference to boys being "strong" made the connection particularly on a physical level. From the different ideas of manhood presented by my participants, there is a comparison to be made in the material between participants' ideas of physical strength in opposition to 'chivalrous' strength. Other participants such as participant **TW** support this view by saying they were told that real men do not cry and express how they feel, which highlights the importance of physical strength in relation to manhood. The use of the word "real man" is one I found interesting as it led me to question what 'other types' of manhood the participant was comparing to. Similarly participant **HD** makes reference to lessons on the "right way to be a boy," which he found were more apparent in the rural areas when he states that "*...from my family side the "right way to be a boy" had more to do with chores that one undertook at home or in the rural areas when we visited for example.*

Bodies and space

"uh, nothing specific. Just things like boys are obviously more notorious than girls....But yes at boarding school the girls were more relaxed than the boys always getting into trouble" (T1)

"Nope. I was never told the right way to be a boy. My parents just let me discover for myself. I didn't hear much about differences between boys and girls, I just saw the differences for myself, boys were aggressive and played rough, girls were into knitting and cooking" (T2)

In addition to being physically different from women, the participants also highlight behavioural expectations which get mapped into ideas of gender dichotomized space and labour where boys are

expected to be more “aggressive and played rough, girls were into knitting and cooking” (**T2**). Most participants assumed their gendered identities based on their perceived sex assignment which was predominantly based on the different spaces occupied by men and women especially within the household. The use of language around the “right way” to be a boy showed how my participants occupied spaces in which ideas about gender normativity left little or no room for “people to conform to this binary, whether that’s people who see gender as more fluid or people who don’t identify with a gender at all” (Hogan; 4; 2004). Instead my participants seemed to shape their lives around specifics of social ideas about gender normativity. For them the gendering process was also based on ideas about the body and how girls and boys are different and as such this influences ideas around marriage for example.

“...I probably took most of my guidance from how I saw my parents got about their business. They both had super careers, but my father was responsible for household- DIY tasks whilst my mother made sure we had good food” (**ST**)

Some participants such as participant **T2** and participant **T1** firstly begin by saying they do not remember distinct lessons on gender dichotomies however upon further discussion they begin to highlight their own ideas about gender normativity constructed around their upbringing and observations at home. The quotes above about gender normativity highlight how masculinities and femininities are mutually reinforcing and institutionally embedded, especially in the household and school spaces. Orina (2014) argues that the “household plays an essential role in molding gender dynamics and in gate-keeping men and women’s access to important institutions” (Orina; 2014; 13). Participant, **ST** shares similar ideas of most participants who present their understandings of manhood and womanhood based on lived experiences and how they were socialized and grew up as ‘normal’ boys. Although some reflect on lessons they were taught, they also discuss how they grew up and observed the main differences of boys being naughtier and braver than girls. In later quotes below, participant **J** further emphasises that the home is a key social institution where femininity is connected to domestic roles and masculinity is connected to ideas about strength and economic status. Participant **J** discusses his lessons on gender dichotomy being based on actual lived experiences in which he began to make associations with the expectations of boys and girls. He

states that *"...at home my sisters usually helped my mom with the cooking and we as boys were always told by our dad to protect our mother and our sisters..."* (J). Although no verbal lessons were given to him on how men and women should act, the gender performance within his household socialized him into associating specific tasks with specific genders.

"I think that men should share work around the house with women such as doing dishes, cleaning, cooking?" *"That is the motto we grew up under at my parents' home.... I think roles should be defined however people should be flexible and not abusing the roles, but couples should help each other"* (P)

"I mean the fact that during meal times me, my brother and my dad and any other male visitor would just go sit at the table while the women would place the dishes on the table and wash our hands... The chores we had to do were always different..." (V).

"...Things like meal times were more segregated with the girls eating in the kitchen hut and the boys wherever they wanted..." (V)

The process of gendering through spatial/labour relations and through school/sports (institutions) further highlights the participants' reflection of their up-bring in which they make reference to the social expectation of the spaces inhabited by men. When asked about whether men and women can share household duties, such as cooking and cleaning, several principal components of masculinity surfaced. Most participants discussed masculinity in relation to their roles as husbands, fathers and heads of households. Ideas about men being the heads of the household are reflected in participant **V's** statement when he highlights that even the process of eating within their household was gendered. Women assumed the domestic role of, as they cooked and served the food to the men. Participant **V's** understanding of specific gender roles and the expected social interaction between men and women was based on his view of the roles and chores of men and women within the household. For him, genders were specifically dichotomized based on particular spaces inhabited by men and women within the home which is an idea shared by many participants. The significance of these institutional spaces shaped ideal characteristics of men and women, and this further connected

gender roles to aspects of power. For example, manly tasks especially in the rural areas included physically “tougher” roles such as cattle herding, and women were expected to remain in the household to cook and clean. Similarly, participant **P** highlights his idea of normative gender roles and how this stemmed from his view that his father seldom assisted with the cooking.

It was not only interesting to hear how the participants represent their ideas of gendering but also the language used exposed much about their ideas and social process of gendering. When discussing their representations of socialization, most participants relate this to the institutional influences which shaped their early and adolescent ideas about gender dichotomies.

“...Also, In High School attending an 'all boy's' school meant that any behavioural advice or instruction was really gender specific so that formed a great part of what I used to view as how boys are meant to act” (V).

The second place where most participants recalled acquiring lessons on gender dichotomy was through their schooling experiences. Here they discuss how lessons from teachers, peers and most importantly the observations they made about the differences between boys and girls reinforced ideas about ideal masculinities in their social space. Connell argues that “informing an individual’s deeds and thoughts, gender structures each individual’s interpretation of reality in particular ways” (Clowes; 2008; 4). Although participant **V** does not mention any particular examples, he highlights that he was given ‘gender specific’ lessons at school, especially about what boys are ‘meant’ to do. For them, ideas about masculinity and femininity are socially and historically constructed identities that continue to shape each other through daily interactions. From the ideas presented by my participants, I argue that “other public spaces like dorm halls and classrooms quietly uphold gender norms by doing nothing to expand discussion outside of the binary, and are therefore just as complicit in enforcing gender normativity. Intentionally or not, these spaces deny a non-conforming student’s identity” (Hogan; 2004; 22).

Normativities

Normativities and economic migration

“...My father is a retired headmaster and my mother was a house wife for most of our upbringing... she retired early from teaching when I was still a toddler...” (H).

“...My father was clerk and my mom was a full time house wife” (TW)

Cornell argues that “the overall patterning of gender regimes, together with the gender patterning of culture and personal life, may be called the *gender order* of a society” and this can create ideas about masculinity (Cornell; 2005). From the quotes and discussions presented, it can be concluded that most of my participants represent their relation to gender and family as normative. The gender normative roles within the households of the participants had a significant impact on how they viewed masculinity and how they understood the roles of men and women in the household.

“Well I studied aircraft engineering but I got invited with construction engineering...” (C)

“I am a banker, I think from a young age I’ve always desired to be one” (SU)

Orina argues that “throughout sub-Saharan Africa, expectations that men build a home, marry and provide for their spouses, children and extended families mediate male youth’s ability to enter socially validated manhood” (Orina; 2014; 12). When asked about their upbringing and family life, many participants shared that their fathers were employed and their mothers were housewives who took care of the children and cared for the household. Although they did not highlight this as an experience that influenced their ideas about gender, their ideas about employment were embedded in gender and sexuality norms. From the data presented I argue that “the organization of work is predicated on the sexual division of labour in the household” (Colgan, Rumens; 2014; 43). Firstly, most of my participants note that they were raised in homes where the father worked and the mother was a housewife, and secondly my participants seemed to gravitate towards careers that are commonly seen as ‘men’s work’ in society including careers in accounting, engineering and they all seemed

proud of talking about how they have developed and pursued such careers. For my participants, the fact that men should be employed and are expected to take care of their families is a concept that was reiterated throughout the conversation.

“I did engineering at the Uni of Science and Tech. I had a lot of pressure from my family to pursue a Medical career path, but by the time I was doing my ‘O’ Levels I knew where my strengths lay so I made a decision to pursue architecture. I was technically ‘savvy’ ever since childhood (laughs) and I was also inspired by my grandfather who was a handy man and builder, so I thought why not” (HD)

When discussing the roles in the household as well as the career paths perused by my participants, it was clear to see that there was a strong connection between the meaning of normativity, economic authority and strength. Besides observing the household dynamics and understanding that a man’s role included working to take care of his family, participant **HD** discusses how he had actual discussions with his family when choosing a career path. He comments on the pressure he faced from his family when he was deciding on his career choice showing again how the family structure moulds ideas about what a man should do.

“...I do see providing for my family as part of my identity as a man...while I assume providing for the family is implying financial provision, I take this to mean spiritual, mental and emotional provision as well” (D)

“Being a man means you have to provide for your family and extended family as they all form part of you and both depend on one another” (S1)

The participants above represent the general idea that all my participants shared in terms of the strong link between masculinity and economic independence, especially with regards to being able to provide for their families and maintaining their households. For them, being a man who is able to provide for their families has influenced significant life decisions such as the decision to become an economic migrant and relocate to South Africa in order to work and provide for their families. Orina

argues that “in post-conflict contexts of displacement, insecurity, years of lost education and collapsed economies and states, men’s inability to save enough money to marry serves to keep poor and marginalized men from attaining adult manhood” (Orina; 2014; 12). This aspect of manhood and being able to financially provide for their families further influenced major decisions such as the decision to marry and pay *lobola* and what this meant to them as men, to their wives and to their parents. I shall discuss this idea further in a following chapter. However, what was interesting to note is that due to the literature explored on ideal hegemonic masculinity, my expectation was that my participants would have an identical view about manhood and financial provision. Yet upon discussing this idea with them, they highlighted how although they grew up in households where the man was the financial provider, they also assumed these roles were changing and therefore women’s roles now also included providing financially. For these men living in modern day Cape Town, their concepts of normativity had shifted from the traditional ideas of the man being the only financial provider.

“Yes, I do think about it. That’s our home. But for now we are trying to build our careers and be able to sustain a family, so I don’t think we will be moving back home right now...Maybe one day if things change and the economy gets better we can move” (J).

“...In both countries there is tremendous pressure for men to provide for the family in an environment that has a shortage of jobs. One of the big differences though is that while Zimbabwe is struggling from a declining economy, South Africa is a hostile environment for foreigners- both the physical xenophobia, and the tedious immigration policies” (D).

When discussing the main issues about living back ‘home’ in Zimbabwe, many participants highlighted the difficulty posed by the current strenuous economic climate. As argued above, my participants viewed their identity as men and providers as intertwined; and therefore their main reason for moving to South Africa was to improve their economic situations and provide for their families.

“...However, when I am in Zimbabwe, it becomes more evident to me the struggles and challenges everyone is facing. It takes a certain type of person to survive there – strong

willed, dedicated, imaginative, enterprising, resourceful and of course a hustler!
Unfortunately, I think I would be fed to the wolves..." (ST)

For **ST** especially, he relates this ability to survive in an economically strenuous environment as a reflection of a certain type of manhood. As opposed to this idea that it is a man's duty to financially provide and this is a common trait in all men to be able to manage this, **ST** highlights that it takes a 'certain type of man' to survive in the economic climate in Zimbabwe at the moment and this includes being both resourceful and being a hustler. From this description, **ST** already highlights that although men may have similar identities as providers, there are different types of masculinities and only certain men can survive in Zimbabwe at the moment. A further reflection from the participants responses to family building and providing was that "being a married man and having a family is an important indicator of male status as an adult man, an attitude that reveals the weight still attributed, in spite of all the changes, to traditional and institutional frameworks of family life and gender relations as a means through which men can assert themselves and construct a dominant, although fragile, position as heads of families" (Aboim; 2008; 9).

"I am fine with that view...I mean growing up we used to help the women with some of the chores especially when the work was too much. However this was still viewed as the women's responsibility... they could delegate if they needed to but I do expect the women to take the lead when it comes to that. However I have no problem with helping or doing something if I was asked to. The same way a woman can also contribute towards other "manly" duties" (HD)

"Personally I help when I feel like doing it. But my wife is always up to her household duties"
(SU)

Although most participants do not assume that society is characterised by significant differences between men and women, it can be argued that some of their gendered ideas are still influenced by traditional patrilineal structures of family and social organization, which is characterized by a system of male dominance. When asked about whether men and women can share household tasks such as

cooking and cleaning, participants **SU** and **HD** particularly agreed with this idea however stating that they can 'help' their wives with this duty although it is a task for women. To most participants, this was not a symbol of 'male dominance' but more of a normative gender order which they have been socialized into. Little (2013) argues that "gender socialization occurs through four major agents of socialization: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Each agent reinforces gender roles by creating and maintaining normative expectations for gender-specific behaviour," (Little; 2013; 15). For these participants, they have to constantly negotiate their masculinity between different worlds based on traditional values and gender roles versus modernity and changing gender norms of daily practices both within and outside the home. Through the interview process, it was easier to see how men are constructing and reconstructing their identities based on modern views where "the man ceases to be the unquestioned head of the family, and the woman gains new decision-making powers; yet traditional gender norms still exist which give men dominance within the home (Aboim; 2008; 3).

Normativity: Seeing women

"I was attracted to her first and foremost by her looks of course, she's very beautiful. Then her personality, and as I got to know her better, I discovered that she had a wonderful character as well...she is sweet spirited, kind, generous...all the good qualities a man would want in a woman" (T2)

"...Her beauty and discipline attracted me initially" (C)

"She was a very friendly person, but very lady-like and what struck me was her beautiful smile, she was easy to talk to..." (T1)

In contrast participant **T1** and participant **T2** also highlight normative masculine traits by discussing their initial attraction to their wives based on her physical beauty, and then later discovering other 'ideal' characteristics as they built a relationship. Although participants do not really highlight characteristics of womanhood when making a contract between boys and girls, they describe this more in-depth when talking about their wives. Participant **T2** describes his wife as "sweet spirited,

kind generous...” then says these are ideal qualities in a woman that men desire. What was interesting is that when describing the ideal characteristics of their wives, all participants referred to non-physical traits. The only physical trait they used to describe their wives was the word ‘beautiful.’ Participant **T1** makes reference to the word ‘lady-like’ but does not go into full detail about what lady-like characteristics are. By using this he unknowingly is highlighting that there are major contrasts between men and women’s behaviour; and furthermore he is highlighting that there are expected gender normative behaviours.

Points of contention and shifting normativities

“Initially I was attracted to her because she was beautiful but I decided to befriend her as opposed to asking her out so I could get to know her better. What I found was even better than just the surface beauty. She was clever, driven, she had an inner strength that only women can poses given the patriarchy our world throws at them” (V)

In contrast to the ideas of strength as critical to masculinity, participant **V** is the only participant who makes the connection between strength and womanhood when he talks about his wife. However, the interesting contrast here is that, although the participants who talked about gender and strength refer to this in terms of physical strength, participant **V** talks about his wife’s strength in relation to aesthetic strength. More importantly he highlights the kind of strength embodied by his wife as a particular strength that only women can possess due to the structures that affect them in society. Gender stereotyping involves over-generalizing about the attitudes, traits, or behaviour patterns of women or men, and because of this, the word strength is rarely used to describe feminine traits.

“...we were actually taught that men should have compassion and should not be afraid to express their feelings. I also distinctly remember my A level Bio teacher telling my mom at one parent teacher conference that she must make me bake during the holidays so that I can improve my practical skills (laughs)..But that’s when I actually started loving to cook and bake” (V)

“...I suppose a couple of things that stand out are being taught about chivalry, opening doors for girls and women and letting women and girls go first at lunch tables etc. Both my parents and the school I went to emphasised this.” (D).

Although many participants at one point make reference to the physical differences between men and women, or discuss the expected household gender roles that men and women should play, there were some participants who, in contrast to the lessons on strength and bravery above, discussed how they were socialized into an understanding of a ‘different’ kind of manhood. For participant **V** for example, who was encouraged to improve on other skills such as cooking or participant **D** who mentions being taught to be compassionate, traits normally associated with being a woman. In addition, some participants, particularly those who went to co-ed schools discuss their ideas of gendering based on actual observations: this is seen in participants **ST**, **T1** and **T2’s** case where they say, *“...I didn’t hear much about differences between boys and girls, I just saw the differences for myself...” (T2)*; in contrast, participant **V** discusses his early ideas about the differences between men and women being based on what he was taught within the confines of a schooling environment.

“Well, as a husband yes I should always provide for my family. But in this day and age you also see women being providers and that’s good too” (T1).

“... I am an extremely proud husband that has a career woman as a wife. The times are changing, and whilst this is primarily the husband’s responsibility, we have women contributing more and more towards this...” (ST)

“I agree with it 100%. I don’t think there is any house work that should be for one gender or the other. The fact that we view certain chores as being gendered is actually problematic to me.....” (V)

“ABSOLUTELY! In marriage there are no fixed roles, only responsibilities. Each person in marriage is responsible for meeting the needs of the home. Who should do dishes? Whoever dirties them? Who should cook? Whoever can. Responsibilities are to be shared” (T2)

Although there were points of consensus between some participants in terms of viewing their fathers as the ones who provided financially, and therefore it was also their role as men to provide for their families; this idea of gender normativity was also a point of disagreement with other participants. As highlighted in the above quotes, 6 of my participants particularly noticed shifting normativities in current society which have also affected the gendered roles within their household. Despite the social expectation of successful manhood being linked to being able to financially provide, my participants have begun to accept that this can also be a woman's role. However I argue that from my participants responses the effects of my participants being economic migrants has affected traditional gender roles, and due to the need for financial security these participants have begun to also view it as a woman's responsibility to assist with financial provision for the family. Furthermore, although my participants embraced the fact that their views worked and contributed to the household, they still viewed this primarily as a man's responsibility.

"Yes this is true, especially in our culture. However given the changes in the economy, it has become a joint responsibility of both partners even though the onus lies more with the man..."

(HD)

"...In these modern times we live in, both men and women go to work and both husband and wife find themselves being in a position to 'provide' for their family" (T2)

I argue that although women are beginning to also provide for their families, the participants feel that onus is still largely on the men as heads of the household, especially in relation to social and traditional pressures. My participants seem to view women's ability to provide for the family as a favourable contribution but not necessarily an aspect that affects the idea of successful womanhood. Similarly, the domestic responsibilities once seen as belonging to women have also begun to shift in modern times as highlighted by participant **T2** and participant **V**. Participant **V** further states that for him in particular the idea about 'gendered tasks' is problematic as he views these as roles that should be shared. Despite the ideas presented by my participants on ways in which ideas about gender normativity can be shifted especially in modern society, I argue that deeper scrutiny of their gender

identification performances, “suggests a troubling irony: these men construct their identifications along very fixed gender binary lines, informed by heteronormativity. While the men exhibit agency by constructing their identifications beyond the normative expectations; their reconstructed identifications do little to shift the heteronormative and patriarchal system” (Levon, Mendes; 1999; 52).

The above analysis on manhood and how gender normative ideas are formed highlights how my participants shape their ideas about manhood and how this has come to affect their ideas about the expectations of a man. For them, social structures such as schools, families and peers have influenced and shaped their understanding of normative gender roles, which for the most part, they adhere to. Despite the minor points of contention in which participants argue that men and women can both contribute domestically and financially within a household, their overall ideas and responses show that they continue to perform specific gender roles based on social influences. Although most of my participants represent their relation to gender and family as normatively masculine, this chapter has not considered their identity as ‘religious’ and ‘cultural’ men which shall be unpacked further in the following chapter.

Masculinity and Intersectionality

In the previous chapter, my analysis of participants' discourses on masculinity highlighted their representations of gender normativities. The chapter included recognition of some participants' interest in reworking certain normative notions concerning 'men' and 'women's' inter-relationships, and also noted the influence of their economic migrancy on their negotiation with 'being a man'. In the following chapter, I deepen this analysis through inclusion of participants' discourses on Christianity, moving specifically into their discourses on marriage as a key fact of normative masculinity.

This will lay the ground for the most important sections of my analysis: participants' representation of *lobola* as a zone through which they organize their negotiation of 'Christian, heteronormative, masculinity'. As my literature review suggested, while the practice of *lobola* is a quintessential thread within Shona-based engagement with marriage, it is simultaneously a zone which may create tension. Such tension may arise from differences between Pentecostal Christian beliefs and the beliefs based in 'groundedness' as Shona men; they may also arise in relation to changing socio-economic environments. My research interests drew on participants' engagement with *lobola* as a way of exploring such tensions, and it is in the final section of this chapter that I turn to the data on *lobola* in order to bring together the different threads of my analysis in masculinities for participants.

Throughout the material analysed, it was clear that ideas about masculinity and gender normativity for my participants were not only linked to age-old lessons from parents and schooling environments as argued in the previous chapter, but they were also strongly based on their cultural beliefs, especially in relation to their adult lives as married Zimbabwean men. Although I chose all my participants for the reason that they identified as Christians who went through the traditional marriage practice of *lobola*, their lived experiences shaped them differently and allowed them to form their own beliefs and opinions about gender, especially within their households. It was interesting to see that although most participants initially articulated their ideas about gender normativity as a mesh of the 'natural' and the 'specific'. Specificities were mapped across the terrains of "culture" and "religion", and the processes of getting married formed central analytic terrain for the analysis of potential negotiations and tensions between the different expectations placed upon them as they grew into adulthood. Questions of marriage, religion and culture overlapped in a complex way throughout the material, and in the

following chapter, each question is explored separately only to highlight the themes of most interest to my research.

Religion

In this subsection of my analysis I shall start by unpacking my participants' understandings of their religion with a particular focus on how and why religion is highlighted as being central to their masculinity. From the material presented in the interview data, it was apparent that being a Christian was and still is an influential part of how they live as men, and as shall be highlighted, many participants locate their Christian identity as being inseparable from their identity as men. In this subtheme my participants highlight interesting ideas such as differences between religion and spirituality, as well as teachings emphasised by the church versus biblical principles. Although the underlying factor is Christianity and how this shapes them as men, it is interesting to see how some aspects are based more on biblical principles or their 'identity in Christ', and other teachings are based on standards upheld and taught by the church. My argument will further explore ideas about religion being a basic moral code which characterizes my participants' views on being a "good man" in society. Finally this section will discuss how and why religion is an intrinsic factor to their views and choices on marriage.

Masculinity and religion

"I love being asked about my religion, or rather my spirituality, because Christianity is really not a religion. Christianity has made me the person I am today, I have lived a life of great grace, I would be nothing if it wasn't for Christ, but now I live life abundantly! The most important things about being a Christian are to love God and love people, those are the greatest commandments" (T2)

"My religious faith holds more significance as a man because all life is determined by God. If I live righteously peace, joy and blessing will be added" (SU)

“I am passionate about my time of prayer and appreciation of the Lord... Christianity has helped shape my moral and foundations and the belief that there is someone bigger than us out there is important to me.” (ST)

For my participants, their choice to uphold Christianity was significant to how they lived their lives as 21st century men. As they grew older they highlight how they made a personal choice to live as a Christian. Participant **T2** for example explains how for him being a Christian is a spiritual aspect and this has influenced the core of who he is as a man. For them, their religious beliefs exceeded simply attending church on Sunday, but they further argue that it influenced how they lived on a daily basis. Participant **T2** emphasizes that he is able to live a fulfilled life because *“Christianity has made me the person I am today, I would be nothing if it wasn’t for Christ” (T2)*. His quote highlights the ideas shared by most participants who view their Christian identity and their identity as men as inseparable. For them, Christianity has shaped who they are and how they live, and influences many of the decisions they made, including who to marry and how to live in society. Similarly, participant **SU** argues that upholding Christianity was important to living an abundant life. From the data presented above I argue that religion and what it is to be a Christian formed an integral part of their lives as men, and in fact who they were as men is a reflection of their choice to live a Christian life and follow certain principles. For example, participant **ST** highlights that for him Christianity has influenced his “moral foundations.” The idea of morality and being good shall be explored further in the subsection below.

“My faith holds more significance because my life is governed by the teachings found in the Word of God. My identity is in Jesus Christ” (T2).

Although my participants identified as Zimbabwean men, raised in a Zimbabwean cultural setting, their identities as men, fathers and husbands were embedded in their religion and beliefs and this defined how they viewed being ‘good’ in society. Participant **T2** argues that culture should therefore be guided by biblical principles, and anything in their culture that does not conform to their biblical teachings must fall away.

Being a “good man”: Religion and morality

“...So what is important to me as a Christian is being able to make the right choices and be a good example” (J)

“For me being a Christian means living a Christ like life, loving all around me, forgiveness, and sacrificing my wants for that which pleases God” (TW).

“...For me being a Christian means listening to the Word and trying to follow what the Bible says. It means trying to love others and being kind” (T1)

Throughout the interview, the data presented by my participants highlighted how the representation of masculine identity significantly influenced by their religious beliefs. Growing up as Christians may have set the basis for their views but their choice as adults to continue to practice the religion began to have more significant effects on how they lived their lives, who they chose to marry and how they viewed ‘ideal’ characteristics of manhood. For example, participant **T1** says that for him, being kind and loving others was a way in which he practised his Christianity and this is how he aimed to live his life as a man. Participant **J** also explains that his choice to be a Christian at this stage shaped his decision making and allowed him to set a “good example.” For all my participants, there was an overarching theme of being “good” in relation to being a Christian man. It was interesting that similar key words were used to reflect the idea of goodness for all my participants, the main discourses were based on love, kindness and especially their relation to their wives and following the Bible. Additionally, participants spoke about identifying with the word of the Bible and living a “Christ-like” life as men. This showed that for them Christianity was not simply following a set of values but that their identity and character was based on emulating Christ.

The “good man” and religious teachings on his relationship to his wife

“A Christian man knows that he must love his wife and be faithful to her, just as Christ loved the church....A Christian man is supposed to respect all women like they are his mother and

sisters....about being a good man- you would know someone was a good man by how happy his family is, and if it is an unmarried man, by how he conducts himself amongst the brothers and sisters, his attitude and words that he speaks.” (T2)

“My understanding of the Christian faith’s view on how men are meant to behave is that men are meant to respect women.”(V)

“A man should be respectful and take care of his wife. Also a good man has a good and loving character and is good others” (T1)

In addition to the idea of “being good” being connected to certain moral standards for my participants, most of them emphasized the idea that about Christian men being seen as good based on how they treated their wives and other women in their lives. It was interesting that the general ideas about how they practised their faith and the teachings of the church were determined by their relation to their wives and other women in their lives which seemed to be a core teaching of the church. Participant **T2** for example highlights that being a good Christian is defined by being faithful to his wife. Similarly participant **V** emphasises that being a good Christian is based on respecting women. Once again, the main argument is based on a man’s character and behaviour as the main determinant of one’s goodness as a Christian man. Participant **T2** also argues that if a man is unmarried he is judged on how he treats his “brothers and sisters.” Once again the main discourses on goodness were centered on respect, love and the way in which a man conducts himself.

“A Christian man knows that marriage is God’s idea, and it is honourable because it is of God. A heathen man lacks much understanding of marriage. A heathen man can never really honour marriage because he doesn’t know God, the author of marriage...” (T2)

In my participants’ narratives of a good man, it can be argued that the church privileges certain versions of masculinity, and also upholds the value of marriage as important. When asked about the expectations of them as Christian men, most made significant links to their understandings of masculinity roles, religion and marriage within the discourse of normativity. For them, most of their

ideas about what their religion teaches them about living in society were related to the biblical teachings on gender normativity, marriagability and heteronormativity. These teachings include how they should treat and be treated by their wives, showing primarily that marriage and behaving a certain way in marriage is an important aspect within the church.

The quote above is a primary example of how my participants viewed marriage as Christians. From the data presented I argue that marriage was also seen as a sign of goodness and honour with the church and as a result my participants upheld the idea of marriage. Participant **T2** for example says “*a Christian man knows that marriage is God’s idea*” and as a result he says that a non-believer lacks the understanding of marriage and cannot honour marriage. For him, there is a significant difference in how a Christian man thinks and how a non-Christian thinks, especially with regards to marriage.

Secondly, participants discussed how the role of a woman was to respect the man, and the role of a man was to be the provider and decision maker within the household. In Ingraham’s (2005) research she argues that from a biblical perspective “...heterosexuality is posed as good, natural and good, and homosexuality is its opposite; that is sex (as well as gender) is socially constructed: that the heterosexual norm is institutionally upheld and promoted and all other sexualities are devalued on a descending grid” (Ingraham; 2005). Therefore, this idea of heterosexual marriage is also linked to the way my participants strive to live a “good” Christian life in society. Discourses on the interconnectivity of marriage, goodness and religion shall be explored further in the sub-themes below.

Religion and gender normativity

“Maybe it’s me, but this (being a good in the Church) has not been emphasised too much however they do talk of the man being the head of the family and the women must love and respect their men, but I think it’s something in the bible not so much put out there by my church” (P)

“...In Church a man is supposed to provide for his family to the best of his ability. He must be respectful to women; So a good man is seen by how he takes care of his family and how his family relate to with him” (TW)

When discussing their understanding of being a good man from a Christian point of view it was interesting to explore the normativities revealed within my participant's representations of themselves as Christian men and how this influenced their marital and gender-relational views. Representations of the man as the "head of the household" were not only discussed in the previous chapter on masculinity but were discussed from a biblical standard by participant **P**. Ideas about respect not only stemmed from their cultural background in which women served men, but also from the biblical idea that women should respect and love their husbands. In the previous chapter I discussed gender normative ideas held by participants and how this was a direct influence from institutions such as school; as well what they witnessed in their homes; it was interesting to see how participants viewed the biblical principles as being in alignment with the gender normative ideas they learned at school and home upbringings. From the data presented I argue that there is an overlap between certain Christian principles and cultural principles especially in terms of defining gender roles within the household. Penner and Stichele (2009) argue that "culture also functions to enable a Christian normative body that is defined against the defiance of the abject culture out of which the normative body arises or against which it is defined (Penner, Stichele; 2009; 132).

Participant **P's** quote also reflects an interesting aspect of the separation of what the 'Church' teaches and 'biblical' principles. He argues that for him ideas about being a good man in terms of being the head of his family and that "women should respect their men", were drawn from the bible and not necessarily emphasised by the church. This separation is interesting because it reflects the multi-layered aspect of Christianity which my participants negotiate to create their holistic view of religion which shapes their character.

"...My understanding of the Christian faith's view on how men are meant to behave is that men are meant to respect women, we are meant to love, cherish and protect the women in our lives, the bible has laid out certain roles for the man like being the head of the family and the provider so this is also part of being a "Christian Man". However how this is then practically applied in our lives differs, like being a provider does not necessarily mean you are the only one who earns a pay-check or has the right to earn a pay-check, you can earn less than your wife but still be the provider in that you make the spending decisions or do the budgeting in the house."(V)

“We are meant to love, cherish and protect the women in our lives, the bible has laid out certain roles for the man like being the head of the family and the provider so this is also part of being a “Christian Man.” (V)

When asked about their background in the interview process, each participant made reference to their religious upbringing and how for most, this influenced ideas about gender, masculinity, household duties and marriage. Because they view themselves as religious, they made connections between being able to love other people or living a “Christ-like life” and following the principles of the bible which governed the way they lived as men. For example participant **V** highlights how *“the bible has laid out certain roles for the man like being the head of the family and the provider” (V)*. However it is interesting that he says this can be applied to one’s life in many different ways in that a man may not be the only one providing for the family but he should be the decision maker. Throughout the interview process it was interesting to see how the participants continued to negotiate these traditional and religious gender-normative teachings to their lives in the 21st century; because although they say it is the man’s role to provide for the family, they also highlight how women can contribute to this and how they still negotiate daily practices to assure the man is the “head of the family”.

“We were raised in a Christian set up and never had much teaching on ‘boy rights’ except what our parents taught us and what the bible says. Traditionally boys were like breadwinners while girls were expected to be doing household chores” (S1).

What was interesting is that although participants discuss the impact of their tradition and faith and describe themselves as being Christians from a very young age, all participants except for participant **S1**, do not make reference to this when asked about their childhood lessons on the differences on gender. Participant **S1** makes an interesting comment that for him, the Christian way of teaching about girls and boys roles was different from the traditional way of structuring gender. Firstly he uses the word “boy rights” to discuss the teaching on the difference between boys and girls; this is interesting in that although the earlier participants such as participant **V** discuss aspects such as the women having to serve the men at the table; the other participants do not discuss these rights or

privileges. **S1** implies that because he was raised in a Christian household there was no major distinction between men's and women's roles discussed; although he does say that the bible which was the guiding principle in their household, was the basis on which they depended on when trying to understand gender dichotomies. On the other hand he clearly highlights that according to traditional principles, gender normative roles were more clearly outlined where boys were expected to be "breadwinners while girls were expected to be doing household chores." This idea of men being breadwinners and ideas of financial provision were closely linked to practice. Upon further investigation, all my participants begin to discuss the significance of their Christian and traditional backgrounds in terms of defining their masculinity. Although they discuss similar ideas about religious and traditional expectations and teaching on masculinity, they also explore how they have been impacted differently and this has shaped how ideas about normativity have influenced how they structure their new families with their wives and children. For most of the participants, their representations of religion formed part of their normativity.

Religion and marriage

"The difference between a Christian man and a man who doesn't follow any religion is that a Christian is more likely to have a stable marriage as the bible will be your guide in whatever you do, as a man and as a woman" (SU)

"A Christian man is a child of God, and an unbeliever is a child of the devil- if you marry an unbeliever then the devil is your father-in-law. One day he will simply visit you. A good man is one who is faithful – 1st Corinthians 4 verse 2" (C)

Some of my participants argued that not only does the church privilege the idea of marriage, but the most favoured is a union between two Christians as this will lead to a more successful marriage. Participant **SU** also states that a person is more likely to have a stable marriage with a fellow Christian because they are guided by 'biblical principles. Therefore, not only did my participants highlight the church as upholding a certain type of manhood, but it also upheld a certain type of marital union and defined how one is seen as marriageable should they be governed by biblical

principles. By saying they respected their wives, followed biblical principles and lived good lives, my participants were representing themselves as religious and marriageable. I argue that my participants' ideas of religion and what it means to be a Christian man was a dominant zone in which the embedded their normativity.

From the data presented above, I argue that religion plays a crucial role in the shaping of my participants' ideas about masculinity, partnership and gender normativity. Participants refer to finding their 'identity in Christ' as well as their understanding of morality stemming from Christian principles. Although they speak about the significance of their religious identity, there was an interesting overlap between how their identities were shaped through culture, religion, parental influences and school. For this reason, I argue that many of the Christian influences for my participants were not only shaped by the church, but also developed from their parental and school environments. For example, in the previous section participants discussed lessons they were taught about protecting their wives and mothers; similarly in this section I highlighted how ideas of 'goodness' in the church were based on a man being able to take care of his family and his wife, which participants mentioned they learned at home, at school, as well as on the basis of biblical principles. I argue that this is because "the community is the core in which religion is expressed. The integrity of the community is sustained by a common understanding of moral and ethical values," thus creating an overlap between religion and socio-cultural definitions of ideal masculinity (Mwakabana; 2002; 11).

Representations of Lobola

In this section, I shall explore the imperative of *lobola* for my participants with a particular focus on *lobola* and marriage; the processes of *lobola* as well as how participants negotiate *lobola* as 21st century men. The thematic section discusses how my participants as Shona men represent masculinities and how this is done with a focus on the meaning of *lobola* with a reference to their religion. The theme on *Lobola* is the most significant as it highlights how participants negotiate their ideas of religion and culture in the 21st century which may create tension for them as Shona men. Firstly, I shall explore the idea of the centrality and ubiquity of *lobola* to masculinity, in which I shall discuss issues of patriarchy, men's status as marriageable and the establishment of their relations to

their wives as the heads of their households. I develop my argument further by analysing the process of *lobola* with a particular focus on identifying which processes matter most and why. Finally my argument shall discuss negotiating *lobola* as a 21st century man, using the data presented to highlight which tensions are caused as a result of choosing to uphold both a cultural and religious identity as a Shona man.

Centrality of lobola to masculinity

“I informed the oldest male cousin of mine that I now intended to marry. We then arranged a meeting with the youngest of my dad’s brothers. We met him and informed him that I intended to marry. He was the one who would then inform all six of my dad’s brothers and my dad as well.” (T2)

“It was really a question from my father on how much I have and him ensuring my uncle and brother came to South Africa for the negotiations” (P)

“I worked closely with my father in identifying who needed to be informed, invited and advised. Then we identified a very good “middleman”, who kept everything transparent and clear” (ST)

“Marriage is an institution that exists in all human societies. For most African cultures, it involves the bridegroom paying bride price to the bride’s family, what is known in Ndebele and Shona as amalobolo and roora respectively. The payment is made in ‘order to legalize the marriage” (Mangena, Ndlovu; 2013; 472). From the quotes presented above, I argue that *lobola* is central to masculinity, and further perpetuates aspects of patriarchy and homosociality as the groom depends on his relationships with other male relatives to assist in the *lobola* process. Men not only lead and oversee the negotiation process, but perform the role of the head of the household during and after *lobola*. The process of *lobola* further perpetuates patriarchal practices by placing the men in a position of familial and financial power. As argued by Mangena and Ndlovu (2013), masculinity is central to the process of *lobola* because “the position of men in the process is a complex and an influential one. They do the

'paying' and the charging" (Mangena, Ndlovu; 2013; 477). For my participants, the process of *lobola* was a zone in which they embedded their ideas about normativity, particularly because the cultural process of *lobola* was one that creates specific gender roles which links masculinity to aspects of power, family building and financial control. Undergoing the process of *lobola* was an instance where they found themselves in uncompromising positions as men and had to perform a specific masculinity in order to gain respect and acceptance within their family and the community at large. As argued by Ricardo and Barker, "the key requirement to attain manhood in Africa is achieving some level of financial independence, employment or income, and subsequently starting a family. Older men also have a role in holding power over younger men and thus in defining manhood in Africa" (Barker, Ricardo; 2005; 4). For my participants, it was firstly important to inform the male figure-heads of their families about their intentions to marry, and these male figure heads had to guide, advise and assist with the planning and financial costs of *lobola*.

"At the first meeting, my uncle was present and he went over to the house and put our cards on the table. There was a middle-man present" (ST)

"We just had a budget for the lobola; my uncle did the negotiations on my behalf" (C)

From the onset, the image of ideal masculinity encompassed in *lobola* is projected in terms of men being providers and assuming the role of family leader. For example, in his research on masculinity in South Africa Ratele argues that "in a recent study on masculinity focusing on boys from several high schools around the Western Cape, similar thinking was evident. Firstly, in response to the question "What is a man?" some of the boys answered that a man is "always considered the head of the household while women are subordinate to men. Therefore a woman is not allowed to (be equal to) her husband when it comes to household decision-making" (Ratele; 2006; 52). Research on masculinities in different African contexts has argued that some 'African' cultural rituals are significant to ideas of 'becoming a man' and this creates a hierarchy where older men are given power over the younger men, and this was apparent in their narrations of their *lobola* experiences. All my participants highlighted the significant negotiation role assumed by the men representatives whom they chose to be their "*munyay*" (middleman). These representatives were not only seen to negotiate on behalf of

the groom but for his family as a whole. Participants highlighted the significance of discussing with and choosing their male representative delegation which included their uncles, brothers and fathers to assist them with the *lobola* negotiations. For my participants, being a man meant going through a social process of negotiation where one moves from a zone of having power within your family, to then having less power during the negotiations, and then being regarded as a 'real man' and head of his household is something that all my participants had to negotiate and aspire to as men.

Men's status as marriageable according to lobola

"If I couldn't afford then I would just have to find a way to afford! If a man can't afford lobola then he is simply not ready to marry, he must wait more and work...again, I bring up the example of Jacob. I was taught early in life that you can never borrow money to pay for lobola" (T1)

For my participants the meaning of economic authority and strength not only shaped their decisions to move to South Africa and become economic migrants in search of more stability, but it also gave them 'rights' to marry. Participant **T1** argues that one's economic authority is a symbol of his preparedness to marry, he says *"if a man can't afford lobola then he is simply not ready to marry, he will just wait and work..." (T1)*. Without this economic authority, a man was seen as not having the right to marry and take over the responsibility of heading a family. In addition to that, participants highlighted that regardless of the strain or financial inability, a man needs to find means to pay the *lobola* as this is "necessary", and therefore not only is one's masculinity dependent on individual financial authority but this financial independence also affects a man's right to marry.

"Yeah because you cannot get married in the church if you did not go pay lobola, it's impossible" (N)

Participant **N** also goes on to say you cannot get married in the church without first paying *lobola* showing the centrality of *lobola* to marriage for Shona men despite the introduction of Christianity which promotes marriage within the church. As mentioned in the subtheme above, *lobola* perpetuates

certain patriarchal characteristics which give the man status as the head of the family and the provider, and this can only be after he has proved his ability as a provider. All the other participants mentioned that they valued paying *lobola* first and only then did they arrange the wedding in the church. The participants highlighted the significance of proving their ability to provide for the future family by being able to save and pay *lobola*. The representation of a marrying man was linked to his financial ability which most say was the most stressful part about planning their *lobola*.

“It was stressful initially trying to save the money for lobola. On the day itself it was at first fun as we were all excited about what was happening until discussions got heated (laughs). It became long and strenuous as the in-laws were not budging on their demands. At the end of the day we were not happy and angry as we thought the in-laws were unreasonable and felt that if we had negotiated with biological parent’s things would have been different. In this case it was my wife’s uncle who presided over the process as her parents were never married” (P)

“We were given a figure to have ready. However, on the day a senior uncle doubled the amount – which, needless to say, was quite a surprise and fairly stressful. Paying lobola was quite stressful, but definitely a worthwhile process” (D)

Participant **P** also highlighted an interesting point in terms of how his family practiced *lobola* and the important status that marriage gives within their custom. As mentioned previously the ability of a man being able to marry, and a woman to find a husband to ‘afford’ to marry her is seen as a symbol of success and respectability within an African context. However, participant **P** also shows how culturally, marriage also gives parents with rights to also participate in the *lobola* negotiations. Since his bride’s parents were not married they could not preside over the *lobola* negotiations and instead the bride’s uncle represented the family in the negotiations. This highlights the significance of marriage within an African context and how this affects rights and social spaces.

In addition, the two participants above highlight the overall view that the process of *lobola* was stressful, mainly because of the financial aspect which they could not control. Ritcher and Morell’s

(2006) research argues that there are strong links between manhood, power and control, and fatherhood especially in African contexts; and therefore the significance of manhood in many societies is important as it shows that one is no longer a minor and has more rights and is respected in society. Similar to my argument in the previous chapter on masculinity, the separation of roles and responsibilities within the household shaped the participants' understandings of manhood and 'real masculinity' and this was accentuated more in the practice and processes of *lobola* in which men had specific gendered responsibilities.

The gendered culture of lobola: The man's establishment of his relation to his wife

"Lobola is good as it shows the man's commitment to stay with their daughter. It's important to both families as it is also a yardstick of the value of the person you are marrying. It also shows your willingness to get a wife" (SU)

"Lobola is a very good practice; it shows a man's commitment to his fiancé, it shows his level of seriousness." (T2)

As mentioned above, the gender culture of *lobola* is one that perpetuates specific gender roles for men and women. For example, most participants highlight the fact that *lobola* is a show of a man's ability to take care of his wife. Therefore the initial establishment of a man's relation to his wife is one whereby he has to prove his ability to provide financially. It is interesting to note that in the traditional practice of *lobola* it is through financial means that a man shows his commitment to marriage and to his fiancé. This once again highlights the economic aspects connected to masculinity and what it means to be a 'real man' culturally and socially.

"I really wouldn't have accepted. If my parents are selling their cow and you are buying it why should I help you pay for it" (C)

"I would not have accepted, it forfeits the whole exercise!" (TW)

“(Laughs) well she didn’t offer to help me pay lobola as it trivializes the marriage” (SU)

Although most of my participants indicated that in modern times women are also able to contribute financially in the household, it was interesting that in the context of *lobola*, financial control and authority was expected to be possessed by the man only. When asked whether they would borrow the money to pay *lobola* from the bank or from their wives, thirteen out of fifteen participants said they would not borrow as this trivialises the marital union. All the other participants strongly disagreed with this idea, highlighting that it is against their traditional beliefs and defeats the purpose of *lobola* as a practice, which places an expectation on the man to show his ability to be a provider. However, it is interesting to note that the practice of *lobola* may create specific gender roles during the process that my participants adhered to; however in general *lobola* does not seem to challenge their normativity outside of the practice. As highlighted in the previous chapter on ‘Normativities’, the participants discuss how women have also entered a space where they can work and financially contribute to a household, a change which most of the participants welcomed. As shown in the quote below, participant **ST** shows pride in the fact that that his wife is also a career woman.

“...I am an extremely proud husband that has a career woman as a wife. The times are changing, and whilst this is primarily the husband’s responsibility, we have women contributing more and more towards this” (ST).

Participant **ST** echo’s idea and states that there are cultural expectations that a man should be a provider but this has since changed in modern times. Therefore, although dynamics in the 21st century may have shifted slightly and are becoming more common within households, men are still expected to be held accountable for financial provision.

Processing *Lobola*

The fluidity of identities and the negotiation of one’s identity are also two key aspects that were highlighted during the interview process. To begin, I shall explore ideas about how masculinity itself demands engagement with payment and the process of *lobola*, especially for my participants. As

much as their religion was and is still key to defining their masculinity and path to marriage, they also discuss the significant impact *lobola* has on their ideas of masculinity within the family and within the community. In the following I shall discuss aspects of the process of *lobola* and why the relationship to negotiation and the relationship to the proposed wife's family are significant to shaping the ideas about masculinity. The discussion shall further highlight discourses of money and economic exchanges and I shall conclude this chapter by discussing matters of self-reflexivity and how my participants viewed themselves as men during the process of *lobola*.

Process of lobola: relationship to negotiation

As had been presented in the data above, *lobola* is a practice that is seen as crucial and non-negotiable to my participants and their families. For them, the pressure of representing their families and building unity with a new family hinges on their ability to successfully afford the *lobola*. However, the main significance of *lobola* is the aspect and family engagement, and the ability to manage the negotiation process due to family assistance.

"Yes I spoke to my family about arranging the representatives and I spoke to my uncle who we had chosen to represent us at the negotiations" (J)

"For me it was my older brothers and my uncle and one close friend. At the lobola negotiations we were told what the family was expecting from us" (T2)

As highlighted in the quotes above, family and family building are also central aspects to the process of *lobola* and these cannot be overlooked. For most of my participants, they discuss consulting with their families with regards to seeking both financial and representative assistance from their families. The process of negotiation was not simply an individualised process for the marrying man, but his family was being represented in the process and therefore it was important to select middle-men who would represent the marrying man's best interest. Once again the process of negotiation was reserved for men and was characterised by financial negotiations whereby the husband's family is told the 'amount' required for *lobola*. However, despite the knowing they were expected to undergo

the process of negotiations they all highlighted the anxiety they experienced initially as they had no control over the process.

“I felt a bit of pressure in that I was representing my whole family” (TW)

Participant **TW** for example discusses an interesting idea with regards to how he experienced pressures because he was “representing his whole family” during the *lobola* process. For these marrying men, the demands on masculinity are not simply pressures on the man as an individual, but this pressure is linked to his identity as the family representative.

Relationship to wife’s family

Throughout the interview process discourses around the significance of family building especially in relation to the in-laws was an important aspect to the men. For all my participants the process of *lobola* also established their initial relationships with their in-laws and facilitated the first official meeting between the two families which are important especially from a traditional point of view. Furthermore it showed a man’s commitment and seriousness which is crucial to establishing lasting relationships in Shona culture.

“Yes lobola is definitely an important practice which strengthens family ties and values... I know in my family, it signifies respect and commitment to your partner.” (HD)

“Lobola is a bride price paid by a husband to be as a token of appreciation to the in-laws family... yes, lobola is a good practice, it says to the in-laws I am serious about spending my life with your daughter and I respect you. I would certainly expect my sons to pay lobola and if I should have a daughter I would also want to receive lobola” (TW)

Participant **TW** further highlights the significance of carrying out the tradition of *lobola* and how younger men already have the social expectation placed on them to pay *lobola*, for example he mentions that he expects his young sons to someday pay *lobola*. Based on the participants’

experiences shared, I argue that the influence of these cultural and social customs has contributed to molding ideas about ideal and acceptable identities and it has further shaped relationships and ideal gender identities in society. Furthermore, participant **TW** argues that *lobola* was an important symbol to his in-laws as it showed that he was “serious about spending his life with their daughter.” Although many participants discuss *lobola* in terms of them gaining respect from their family, participant **HD** also emphasised that paying *lobola* was a way of respecting his in laws highlighting the importance of paying *lobola* to establish a particular relationship with his wife’s family.

“We wanted to get married within a year after the engagement so my wife had already started informing me about the standard Tswana process- But being a foreigner, this made it a little complicated... They stated a minimal number of cattle they expected- with the expectation of me to add more.....Typically, they would want live cattle, but being a foreigner, they would give me a monetary value per beast and I was allowed to pay in cash. I went with a small delegation, about 10 people. An uncle from her family came over to my house the night before, and guided us through the process- This was much appreciated because we were not 100% sure yet. (ST)

“Yes, there was some pressure. It was quite stressful financially, but also a stressful time relationally – while meeting extended family and trying to make a good impression. One thing that made it quite difficult was my inability to speak Shona, which many of Ru’s family spoke” (D)

“It was one of the most exciting days of my life but I was also very anxious. Her parents made it as smooth flowing as possible. It benefited me immensely in that it brought me a wife” (C)

Similar to the previous chapter on Normativity, being a man, especially with regards to *lobola* has a strong connection to aspects of finances and being in control which created significant tension for my participants. Although aspects of heteronormative masculinity are linked to the idea that men are confident and able to lead a family and provide, it was interesting to see that my participants

expressed feelings of nervousness with regards to the *lobola* process, especially **ST** and participant **P** who married women from a foreign culture. The tension participant **ST** experienced from marrying a bride 'outside' the Shona culture meant having to rely on one's wife and members of the bride's family which was a complex negotiation for my participants. Participant **ST** discussed how he had to rely on his wife's uncle who came to help them navigate the process and this helped them as they were unsure of the Tswana process of *lobola*. Participant **ST** also highlighted the complexities that arose from marrying a woman from a different cultural background which meant adjusting the process to accommodate the two families. **ST** mentioned that the required *lobola* was converted into monetary value because he was foreign and would not be able to bring live cattle. Participant **D** highlights that for him, the pressure he experienced stemmed from the desire to make a good impression to his in-laws which was difficult due to his inability to speak Shona. It was interesting that for my foreign participants, the clash between different cultures or the clash between religion and the Shona tradition was not a major point of contention, but instead the pressure to perform and financially afford *lobola* as well as understand the requirements of their bride's cultures were the main point of tension. From the research discussed in my literature review and from the data presented in my interviews I noted that although the common view of masculinity is associated with being in control, especially of their homes, choosing careers and choosing who to marry, most of the participants all seemed to be nervous and less in control when speaking about their lived experiences and process of marriage through *lobola*, especially in relation to marrying a foreign wife and raising the funds to 'afford' the *lobola*.

Cost of lobola: Money and the pressure to perform

Events such as their wedding days and their reflections on a man's role in the house as well as the main challenges of fatherhood were mostly discussed by the participants in terms of financial provision. For my participants the inability to know the figure expected for *lobola* until the day of the ceremony led to a strenuous experience where participants indicate that tensions began to build. From this observation I argue that access to funds constitutes some of the pre-requisites for enjoying political control over one's life, especially in terms of marriage and family building. The ability to have

financial means but a lack of financial control and authority had a significant effect on the participants as their identities as men who are financially independent were being tested.

“The pressure mostly had to do with the planning and trying to make sure I had enough. You can’t really be sure what the expectation is till you get there” (J)

“For me, the lobola process was smooth. It was mostly helpful that I had the financial means to meet their expectations. Without which it would have been very strenuous (laughs)” (HD)

Although the process of *lobola* places much emphasis on authority possessed by men especially when negotiating the *lobola*, there was a larger emphasis on financial authority which placed a lot of pressure on my participants and was a key factor to defining their achievement of manhood. It is interesting that affordability and finances were at the crux of achieving successful manhood and in the context of marriage through *lobola*. Similarly, participant **HD** also highlights that for him, his ability to afford the *lobola* resulted in him having a smooth *lobola* process and without the financial means he would have been strained.

Throughout the research it was important that the participants supported the idea of paying *lobola* and also show their sense of pride for being able to make the *lobola* payment. However, it was interesting that despite upholding the practice of *lobola*, being able to financially afford *lobola* was a major zone of tension for all the participants. For example assuring that they “had enough” financially and met the financial expectations of their in-laws was important because being able to afford *lobola* did not only have a bearing on how participant’s manhood but also affected how their family was viewed, but also affected the initial relationships with their in-laws.

“Well I can’t say for sure what exactly what I was expecting, but I thank God I was able to provide what they were asking for. I have a good relationship with my in-laws and I think that made everything less stressful for all of us” (T1)

“I had a very good lobola process and this is really due to my in-laws... they were extremely accommodating and fair, and they made the entire process enjoyable. Further, the cash payment I made for lobola was put into our wedding expenses by my father in law. This was greatly appreciated” (ST)

As a result of this tension and pressure they experienced when paying *lobola*, many participants expressed gratitude towards their family who assisted them, and to their in-laws who did not charge high amounts for *lobola*. Therefore, for the marrying man in particular, who is supposed to be financially independent, it was interesting how the participants revealed their need for assistance during the process of *lobola* and also hoped for reasonable bride prices. Participant **ST** also shows an interesting shift in the traditional practice of *lobola* whereby his father-in-law contributed the cash payment for *lobola* into the wedding expenses. This shows an interesting change in the traditional practice of *lobola* whereby in-laws are beginning to assist to make the wedding processes easier for the husband’s family in different ways.

Lobola and the importance of status and respect

The aspect of adhering to the ‘correct’ cultural procedures as a man and gaining respect were two important discourses throughout the interview process. For my participants, the social and family expectation to make a *lobola* payment was a central influence for their reason to pay *lobola*. When they reflected on the process and their personal experiences of paying *lobola*, my participants discussed how successfully completing the process earned them their family’s respect which brought them much pride. Mangena argues that “it is precious to both sides of the relationship. It is a sign of love to the wife and her parents; it ensures the husband respects his wife” (Mangena; 2013; 474).

“To me it’s ok (lobola) because as a man you have to do it you can’t skip it so, I even feel great” (N)

“We did everything the traditional way and I loved it so much because of the respect I earned from my ‘fathers’- my dad and his brothers. Too many of my cousins have been just

impregnating girls out of wedlock then 'vozongotizirwa', so they were proud of the honour I gave them when I did things the 'proper' way" (T2).

"I had to work hard to raise the lobola payment; I felt it was worth it. I felt that I had achieved something, proved myself..." (TW)

Despite the anxiety and financial strain, my participants viewed themselves as successful men because they were able to provide for their wives as well as afford to make the *lobola* payment. The sense of achievement and ability to uphold the expected image of provider was important to my participants as men. Furthermore, adhering to this expected heterosexual masculine image by finding a wife and marrying was crucial with regards to both the Christian and cultural masculine beliefs upheld by my participants. Participants **N** and **TW** highlight that they felt a sense of achievement especially because they proved that as men, they were able to 'afford' and financially take care of their wives. It is interesting that although the men do not view *lobola* as a process of 'buying' a wife their choice of language refers to 'affording a wife' or being told the 'cost of *lobola*'. I argue that this is as a result of men's success being connected to financial means in many cases. For example participant **TW** discusses how he had to work hard to "afford the *lobola* payment".

Negotiating lobola as a 21st century man

Wetherell and Edley (1999) argue that "we should understand hegemonic norms as defining a subject position in discourse that is taken up strategically by men in particular circumstances. Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable; but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments...Masculinity represents not a certain type of man but rather a way that men position themselves through discursive practise" (Wetherell, Edley; 1999; 841). In addition to this argument, the data provided by my participants highlighted the strong link between masculinity and gender performativity, more so in modern times. Regardless of their financial status, my participants had to show their ability to pay *lobola*, even if this meant borrowing from other family members. Participants also make reference to being under pressure about finances during *lobola* and performing according to cultural expectations. Despite being foreign or despite relocating to a different

country participants still valued the need to follow the “right procedures” culturally highlighting how their masculinity in the 21st century is still defined by a process of negotiations culturally, religiously and financially.

“There was the financial obligation – to be able to pay what was expected. But also, there is an expectation to fulfill the cultural duties of the man during lobola. If I chose not to fulfill these duties, I would be viewed with disdain by family” (D).

“The amount paid was not the main thing but the fact that I was following the right procedures in our culture. I discussed the lobola with my wife, for her it was an issue of I know you love me and that you do not have a lot of money but just try your best because too small an amount will an embarrassment” (TW)

Although my participants have immigrated to South Africa and live a rather ‘modern’ lifestyle, they all expressed the significance of upholding traditional practices such as *lobola* for different reasons. The main reason was simply the expectation from family to uphold their culture and pay *lobola* as a symbol of traditional marriage. Despite marrying from a foreign culture or marrying a fellow Zimbabwean, all participants assured that they prepared and followed the required process of *lobola* despite living in modern times, or despite identifying as Christian which could have been seen as clashing with tradition. Participant **D** for example explains the pressure of being able to pay *lobola* based on how his family would view him, both from a financial perspective but more so from a cultural perspective. If he had not paid *lobola* he would have been viewed as a disdain to his family, and this was one particular reason most participants discussed in terms of paying *lobola*. However, many of the quotes in this chapter highlight changes that have affected my participants in modern times, including having more financially active wives who contribute to the household, having in laws who assisted them either with information or by contributing to the process which helped to ease the stress of the *lobola* process, or having to relocate to South Africa and some marrying foreign women. Despite this however, my participants still reflect on the process of *lobola* by viewing themselves as providers and gaining respect as men after successfully fulfilling the cultural obligation of *lobola*.

“...and even Jacob worked 14 years to pay off the bride price for Leah and then Rachel, it is a biblical practice” (T2)

“For me this is important, both traditionally and as Christian so I will just explain the value of paying lobola to my daughters” (C)

“It was a tough process for me, because of such a high figure that I was charged, and like I already mentioned, it made me grow in faith. The amount of money I went with could easily have paid of most lobola figures, with the guy even going back with change” (laughing) (T2)

Although my participants discuss their ideas about having a cultural and religious identity and how this affected their ideas about gender normativity and marriage, it was interesting to note that this cultural process does not create a zone of tension for them as men. Two participants highlighted the connection to *lobola* not only to the process of traditional marriage and family building but in relation to building their faith as Christians. One example is highlighted in participant **T2's** quote above. It was interesting how for him, his ability to successfully pay *lobola* was an event in his life that affirmed his religious faith. Similarly participant **T2** makes a connection to the story of Jacob in the bible to highlight the importance of working to afford *lobola*. This not only shows how they locate themselves within the African and Christian context, but also how they insert their faith within constructions of normativity; and how these normative constructions are not based on hegemonic masculine ideas. From this observation I argue that the midst of African masculinity and defining manhood on an African context, aspects of religion are deeply connected to how African men have shaped their identities. Moreover, both religion and cultural practices in this instance seem to propel a certain version of masculinity linked to heterosexuality, financial independence and marriage. For most of the participants, their reflections of masculinity show an intertwining of different symbolic references of traditional values and the development of Christianity which also shapes their identities as men.

Lobola in the 21st century: Shifting ideas in modern day Zimbabwe

Despite the social expectation of men during and outside the process of *lobola*, some participants argued that the changes in society have led them to think differently about the financial obligation of *lobola*.

“If it was absolutely necessary that we went through the lobola process to get married then I would have accepted – simply because our getting married would be more important than my pride” (D).

“..in reality, I may have accepted, on conditions this shall be repaid as family money, and no mention will be made to anyone else” (ST)

“Yes, at the end of the day money out of my pocket is money out of hers and vice versa” (P)

Participants debate the idea of borrowing funds from their wives in order to pay *lobola*. Although most argued that they would not because borrowing affects the process of *lobola* and it is a man's obligation to secure funds for *lobola*, some participants such say they would borrow. Participant **D** for example highlights that the issue of accepting or not accepting to borrow *lobola* from his wife is a reflection of a man's pride, and for him he would be comfortable borrowing because getting married is more important than his pride. However, the other participants above who did agree to borrow the funds for *lobola* from their wives would have done so in hesitation and still highlighted that this was the incorrect mode of practice as it is a man's responsibility. This again highlights issues of tension created by aspects of social expectation, modernity and masculinity. The responses from the participants about the expectations of a man within the context of *lobola* and marriage highlight the traditional traits of masculinity which have continued to have a significant influence on the shaping of masculinities in modern times. Moreover, despite changes in modern times where women are more financially independent and can assist their husbands to contribute towards their *lobola*, it was interesting to see how participants still had reservations due to their ideas of the right way to pay

lobola as a man. However the fact that this issue can now be considered and debated in different households shows how the gender culture embedded in *lobola* is shifting in the 21st century.

Lobola and 21st century changes

As argued by Aboim, issues such as male unemployment and underemployment pose difficulties for the 'common' gender model that links masculinity to the identity of provider and breadwinner. When discussing the main issues about living back 'home' in Zimbabwe, most participants discussed the difficulty posed by the current strenuous economic climate. For my participants, the process of *lobola* in relation to finances and gender normativity presented them with many challenges. I therefore argue that financial control has a significant influence on the identities of African men as this provides them with their desired respect and determines if they are able to marry.

"I think the motives behind the lobola practice have changed a lot in recent times, highlighted by the fact that it is now common to hear one asked what he was "charged" for lobola suggesting it was a transaction. My simplistic view is that the capitalistic tendencies of "Western ideology" have twisted peoples' views of lobola such that lobola is often seen as an opportunity to make money" (D)

"I respect lobola and understand why I had to pay it. This is something we have discussed with my wife. Whilst we both agree that it is now being abused by people- it's like a get rich quick scheme-we differ when it comes to our daughter. I will demand a nominal lobola, so that we keep the tradition alive but not financially cripple the groom (ST)

"The essence of its existence has evolved with time; especially the whole financial distress has moved some women's families to take it (lobola) as a means of making economic gains" (HD)

Although the material above highlights the thoughts around my participants' assumptions that they would get married, and that marriage was a critical part of their masculinity, they also argue that

lobola has become an economically abused process in modern times. However, despite this it is interesting to note that not only do they still think it was a crucial process of marriage for them, but also encourage *lobola* to be paid for their children. For example participant **ST** states that to keep the tradition he will demand a small *lobola* figure for his daughter. Chabata (2010) argues that while *lobola* has been commercialised, it still retains its cultural significance to some extent – namely the art of joining two families together and appreciating the important role played by the in-laws in bringing up the bride (Chabata; 2010; 12). This shows that despite the negative discussions around *lobola* in modern times, all participants still uphold it for the cultural and symbolic value. As argued by Chireshe (2010) “*lobola* is a valuable part of African culture that should be allowed to thrive. The picture that emerges is that *lobola* is certainly persistent even among urbanized and educated people, a notion expressed by May (1993). *Lobola* thus seems to be one of those enduring aspects of African culture. The fact that *lobola* is supported on the ground that it is a traditional practice seems to echo the saying ‘longevity is legality’ thus because *lobola* has been practiced since time immemorial, it has a legal status and as such should not be abolished” (Chireshe; 2010; 215).

Lobola and the tete: A female symbol of ‘power’

“I had already been in contact with her tete to ask for her hand in marriage. She then spoke to my wife’s parents and a date was set where we would then arrange the lobola” (J)

“So, I spoke to her family via her aunt or “tete” in Shona soon afterwards- after the proposal- to begin the formalities. The family was very receptive to me; I was already familiar with her siblings which made it much smoother” (HD)

Throughout the interview process, participants highlighted how their ideas about gender as well as normative gender roles stemmed from the roles enacted by men and women within the household where the men worked and were economically independent, whilst the women were housewives. When approaching the study of the cultural process of *lobola*, many feminists have begun to analyse the power (im)balances potentially imposed upon married women and men. Although the process of *lobola*, like many African cultural practices, places men at the centre of power and control especially

in relation to being the one who negotiates and 'marries' his wife, it is interesting to see the key role assumed by older women in the family, particularly the aunt of the bride. Nkosi (2011) argues that "in terms of the power model this idea refers to society at large, that generally one social group has and maintains power over another...in socialist feminism it refers specifically to gender, that men generally have power over women" (Nkosi; 2011; 6). Although many authors have argued that the process is extremely patriarchal, it is interesting to view the symbolic power held by the *tete* (aunt), who has always been a well-known figure in Shona patriarchal rituals. When outlining the steps taken towards *lobola* negotiations, most participants firstly approached the bride's aunt (*tete*) to initiate their intent to marry, and only through the *tete* was the process started.

Lobola versus religion: Tensions

"Both my religion and cultural identity do hold significance, but not specifically for me as a man but in general. Both religion and culture represent a history from which lessons can be learnt and how to mould one's character. In both culture and religion there are basic ideas which if followed whether you are a man or woman can make you a good person" (HD)

"My answer might be a little different here, and possibly controversial. I have been raised in the Christian way of life, and I believe in all the teachings. However, I am also open-minded and have engaged in several deep debates about religion. As a Christian man, my job should be to pass on the teachings, life stories and benefits on Christianity. More often than not, I think we are quick to judge, criticise and chastise people who do not follow the same religion whilst branding ourselves as perfect" (ST)

From the research and data presented in my interviews, it is interesting to note that my participants, although raised as Christians, did not face dilemmas when it came to practicing their religion and upholding traditional values. Contrary to previous research on African masculinities, religion and tradition do not create tensions when it comes to negotiating daily practices and ideas about the right way for to live as an African man. My participants above argue that they have been able to identify as both Christian and traditionally Shona, but this did not cause pressures in the way they performed

their manhood or how they decided to marry. For many of my participants, despite having strong religious beliefs, they uphold *lobola* and their culture and highlight how they can uphold both practices in unison. They argue that both tradition and culture have provided them with valuable lessons that have shaped their characters, and that much of their religious practice is embedded in tradition as well, such as paying *lobola*. Participant **ST** for example talks about how he has discussions with his non-Christian friends and attempts to impart his teachings without judgment.

“No one in our churches objected to the fact that I paid lobola. I think within our circles there is a healthy respect for cultural tradition, as long as they are not worshiped and lifted above their proper place. The only real objection to lobola was on the basis that it often financially cripples young couples” (D)

Participant **D** argues that rather than *lobola* being discussed as contradictory to the church’s beliefs, he states that it is the economic factor which the church has more of an objection to. The current high prices asked for *lobola* are the main cause of tension, and this was also experienced personally by my participants when they were preparing to pay *lobola*. Similarly the material presented throughout this chapter highlights areas where *lobola* is discussed in connection to stories in the Bible and therefore my participants uphold it as a wholesome practice. However when they discussed areas of tension, this was mainly referred to in terms of raising enough funds, representing their families and also hoping to establish a positive relationship with their in-laws.

“I have heard that said before but that is a ludicrous idea. Isaac’s paid the bride price for Rebecca, and even Jacob worked 14 years to pay off the bride price for Leah and then Rachel, it is a biblical practice” (T2)

“I have heard some people air this view; I frankly think it’s incorrect. One’s Christianity is not infringed by lobola. My view is that the “white wedding” is mostly about the couple getting married, lobola is more about the families so this is the balance that exists between the 2 practices” (V)

“It’s the first time I am hearing the idea. I think Christianity upholds a culture which officialises or cement the relationships between in-laws” (TW)

When discussing whether *lobola* was seen to affect or contest one’s Christian beliefs, all my participants defended their choice to pay *lobola* and highlighted biblical instances when a man had to work to “afford” to marry his bride. Despite the different backgrounds, all my participants had similar views in arguing that Christianity and the traditional practice of *lobola* can be practiced together and each process is a sign of marriage and respect. As African men, it was interesting to note that upholding traditional values and religion did not cause tensions when deciding how they negotiated their identity and masculinity; but rather these two aspects complemented each other.

“I met my wife at Uni – we were friends for 5 years before we started dating.... 3 years into it, we got married traditionally in 2010, and we wed in 2012. We don’t have children yet” (HD)

“I still belonged to the white garment church. We haven’t had a wedding in church yet, just the lobola ceremony” (SU)

“Not paying might cause tension with his in-laws, that’s a problem” (TW)

Although some participants noted that their religious beliefs were more important or that they upheld both their traditional and religious beliefs simultaneously, it was interesting to view that practicing *lobola* was more important than having a marriage in the church. Participant **HD** for example only married his wife in the church 2 years after he paid *lobola*. Participant **TW** emphasises the importance of *lobola* when he said “not paying might cause tension with his in-laws” therefore *lobola* is the primary symbol of marriage for these men. Some participants are yet to have their weddings in the church although after *lobola* they considered themselves as married and there is no tension from the church with regards to this.

What was interesting about my research exploration is that although theoretically much western research has highlighted that there should be tensions especially on the basis of Christianity versus tradition, this was not so according to my participants. I argue that for my participants, the tension is

not a result of religion versus culture, but rather there is a relationship between the two. Despite highlighting that *lobola* can be abused by some families who seek to use it for economic gain, none of my participants doubt the appropriateness of *lobola*, but instead flagged the only tension arising with regards to marrying outside.

“Yes. I try stay true to both my religion and respectful of traditions. I think there is often common ground between the two in some situations. For example, before we embark on long journeys my father will perform the Sotho tradition where he talks to his ancestors for guidance and protection, and my mother will immediately follow with a prayer” (ST).

Although the literary argument is that many African men are in a contradictory position as they are forced to choose between exercising their cultural heritage and modern or religious agendas of faith and gender equality, this argument is less apparent for the Zimbabwean men who I interviewed. These men have continued to successfully negotiate their identities as young, Shona, Christian, educated and independent Zimbabweans; upholding their cultures as well as advocating for religion and equality in their household. They have mainly accomplished this by adopting a critical lens with regards to social or western beliefs about their practices, and as a result many have begun to assert themselves by making decisions despite cultural upbringings.

Additionally, I argue that it is not religion versus culture that causes an issue for these men as they are able to negotiate and narrate their masculinity. Therefore it is not *lobola* versus the church but rather some participants highlighted how their lives are shaped by embracing both *lobola* and the church and how these two aspects of their lives intertwine to symbolise marriage. Rather in my research I uncover other causes of tension such as the financial pressures placed on these marrying men, especially when they decided to pay *lobola*. Many participants highlight how the ability to “afford” *lobola* is a sign of respect, manhood and this brings honour to both his wife and his family. The impact of the economy on these Zimbabwean men not only shaped their zone of marriage, but also influenced them to become economic migrants and relocate to Cape Town to earn a living. When asked about the major issues facing Shona men today, they all highlighted issues around economic instability which has impacted many men both living within and outside Zimbabwe.

I conclude with a quote from Ndlovu and Mangena (2013) which reads: “customs such as bride price payment are part of African traditional religions. In a new African world that could have started with colonialism, Africans started having options in religious beliefs. Christianity is one of the major options. Christianity became part of the African realities through International Journal of Asian Social Science, 2013....It however has become part of the African religious systems and so many Zimbabweans are part of it. We cannot dispute this reality even if we insist on being Afrocentric. There is a way in which it is possible to be a Christian in the African sense; this may start from the interpretation of the bible to the methods of worship that have an African flavour. In contemporary Zimbabwean society, there is a relationship between bride price payment and Christianity” (Ndlovu; Mangena; 2013; 479).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I came to my research interest through my experiences as an African woman studying Gender studies, as well as through my interaction with African men who have since relocated to South Africa and had to marry through *lobola* for different reasons. Having initially approached my research with an understanding of gender normativity being fluid, and subject to contextual change, it was interesting to explore and debate aspects of regular negotiation and gender dynamics which have barely shifted in the 21st century society. My participants, despite their experiences as men who have had to manage major socio-economic challenges and seek employment and lives far from the contexts in which they grew up, represent a remarkable level of consistency around the norms of gender. Although my participants identify as modern and discuss overlaps between what was once seen as strictly a man or woman's role, ideas about the fluidity in domestic gender roles appear to be the exceptions that prove the rule.

In my research I take elements of marital ritual and practice in Zimbabwe while exploring questions of the economy explored by my participants and posing arguments about both the ways in which men are made into subjects as providers and heads of the household through the meanings produced in these performances. In my analytic chapter I discussed what affects them by exploring the themes that make their personal experiences both different and similar, as well as how the tradition of *lobola* influences what it means to be a man in the eyes of this customary practice, in the eyes of peers, under a Christian umbrella identity. This was particularly highlighted under the subsection of *lobola* which was seen as imperative to marriage to all my participants. Some participants make reference to *lobola* being aligned to bride price in a biblical context thus highlighting its significance from both a religious and cultural perspective.

In order to draw my concluding remarks, the material I examined was broad and included archival documents, online articles, and participant observation, all of which I gathered multiple, "contradictory, productive narratives about the ways the marriage ritual imbues and is imbued with meaning and intention" (Mupotsa; 2014; 256). Most literature on African masculinities argues that the ability to uphold both African traditions and religion for African men in particular is complex and leads

to tension especially when attempting to uphold characteristics of the 'ideal' masculine identity. Upon reviewing data presented by participants, I uncover other causes of tension for the modern day Shona man who upholds both the traditional practice of *lobola* and identifies as Christian. In my analysis I argue that discourses around other aspects such as economic responsibilities and migration may be a larger cause of social pressure for them as African men.

Theoretical conclusions

Drawing from the data discussed in my analytic chapter, I argue that the pressures associated with being a 'man' especially in relation to religious, social and cultural constructs of masculinity are common experiences for most men. Furthermore, a comprehensive examination of the practice of *lobola* in relation to recent economic changes, the dual practice of Christianity and upholding tradition for men in the 21st century, and how this affects men's identities seems worthwhile. To present my concluding remarks on the above, I employ the use of theoretical conclusions which concisely present my key findings based on the overarching themes in my analytical chapter. As argued by many authors on masculinity, I begin by exploring the theory of masculinity being a social construct based on contexts one is placed within. Based on my analysis of gender roles according to religion and the practice of *lobola*, my second theoretical conclusion highlights the argument that religion and ritual stabilize gender normative behaviour, creating defined roles for men and women especially within the household and family structure. Despite changes in post-colonial and modern day Zimbabwe, I argue in my third theoretical conclusion that ritual is still significant in shaping masculine identities for many men. Finally, I conclude that negotiating intersections of religion and tradition do not create a zone of tension for Zimbabwean men, but rather their status as migrants in search of economic stability creates a point tension for these Zimbabwean men. I shall further highlight how this tension caused by their financial aspirations still does not cause them to disregard aspects of gender normativity.

Theoretical conclusion 1: Masculinity as a social construct

*"Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals-
Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and*

therefore can differ in gender relations in a particular gender social setting” (Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 836).

As argued by Morrell (1998), “international research has strongly confirmed the initial insight that gender orders construct multiple masculinities. Finally, a considerable body of research shows that masculinities are not simply different but also subject to change. Challenges to hegemony are common, and so are adjustments in the face of these challenges” (Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 835). As presented by my participants, identifying as an African man is a process of constant negotiation within different social contexts that shape beliefs about, and create different masculinity. Although my participants had similar contextual backgrounds of being raised as Christians in Zimbabwe, they highlight how they became more exposed to other ideas on gender normativity within other social contexts as adult men. Ideas about ritual, religion, and gender normativity which were characterised by parental and institutional (school) influences shifted as the men had more agency as adults to debate these aspects. Although most grew up in settings where the father was the sole provider, they discuss how current society is characterised by both the man and the woman being able to provide for the home. As argued by Connell and Messerschmidt, “masculinity represents not a certain type of man but rather a way that men position themselves through discursive practise,” meaning that masculinity is a social construct that is subject to change (Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 841). In their homes, participants discussed being flexible with regards to gender normative roles upheld, such as men being able to clean and women also assisting to financially provide for the family. However, despite this, all the overarching discourse with regards to masculinity was that men should maintain the role as a provider, protector and head of household, all of which are ideas drawn from social constructs of masculinity, embedded in tradition, religion, family backgrounds and institutions such as schools

Theoretical conclusion 2: Culture and religion continue to re-emphasize gender roles in 21st century Shona spaces

“Gender is thought to be the means by which cultures define ideals of masculinity and femininity. It is these gender ideals that male and female gender roles are conceived and assigned. The

physical differences such as body structure, sexuality, reproductive functions have greatly contributed to how gender is defined” (Eusson; 2001; 37).

Researchers on masculinity argue that “the original formulations laid some emphasis on the possibility of change in gender relations, on the idea that a dominant pattern of masculinity was open to challenge—from women’s resistance to patriarchy, and from men as bearers of alternative masculinities. Research has very fully confirmed the idea of the historical construction and reconstruction of hegemonic masculinities” (Cornell, Messerschmidt; 2005; 848). However I find that despite changes that have taken place which reconstruct and challenge ideas about masculinity and gender normativity in many African societies, participants noted that the traditional provider role was reserved for men. Some justified this on the basis of biological differences and highlighting that men are physically stronger and therefore assume protector and provider role. As explored in my research, history, tradition and religion in Zimbabwe has shaped roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women. This is a space which places men in positions of power and provider, and women in the role of caregiver and home maker. However, they argue that although gender normative roles in the home were previously based on social and cultural structures, gender role division in the modern period is, to some extent, emphasised on personal choice. Clowes (2008) argues that “although colonialism, industrialisation, migrancy and urbanisation might have undermined the material basis of rural economies, the history of these societies remained, as Morrell notes, ‘woven into a myriad of gendered rituals which served to legitimate the sexual division of labour and male power” (Clowes; 2008; 6). Although participants supported the idea of women choosing to join the workforce and provide for the home and the idea that household duties can be equally distributed, this hardly shifted normative gender roles within the household. From a both a biblical perspective and through an understanding of the process of *lobola*, men were thus seen as the head of the household and women as the homemaker and caregiver which participants do not challenge. Therefore, despite modernity and social changes which have influenced and challenged traditional ideas about ideal masculinity and gender normativity, I argue that essential constructs of social, political and economic structures of power still characterise the man as the main holder of power both within the household and in society. I therefore conclude that masculine identity can be defined as the “endorsement and

internalization of cultural belief about systems about masculinity and male gender, rooted in the structural relationship between the two sexes” (Eusson; 2007; 37).

Theoretical conclusion 3: The significance of ritual to African masculinities in the 21st century

“The picture that emerges is that lobola is certainly persistent even among urbanized and educated people. Lobola thus seems to be one of those enduring aspects of African culture...supported on the ground that it is a traditional practice seems to echo the saying ‘longevity is legality’ thus because lobola has been practiced since time immemorial, it has a legal status and as such should not be abolished” (Chireshe; 2010; 215).

Despite contemporary critiques of the cultural practice of *lobola*, it continues to remain central to marriage in Zimbabwe predominantly because it symbolises the seriousness of a man, as well as solidifying family unity. Rituals and rites of passage are significantly important because they mark transitions of one’s life cycle and provide each individual and the community with an identity and a sense of belonging. This is more emphasised in ritual practices that mark a transition from boyhood to manhood. From birth, many African children are taken through a series of rituals and cultural practices in order to prepare them to be future custodians of their culture. As people go through different changing phases of life, the community will perform different rituals to appeal to the spiritual forces for help and guidance. In his research, Masaka (2009) highlights that despite effects of globalisation and the introduction of Western influences, many Shona traditions in Zimbabwe continue to be at the core of their belief system (Masaka; 2009; 189). Similarly, I argue that the Zimbabwean system of marriage through *lobola* is at the crux of what it means to marry, therefore although some may marry in the church or through the Marriage Act, this marital union is normally prefaced by the process of *lobola* due to the significance placed on the cultural practice in Zimbabwe. I argue that despite modernisation and religious influence, the importance and strong influence that African rites and rituals play in the daily life of Africans cannot be overlooked, even for Africans who have adopted religions such as Christianity or Islam. Hance and Mwakabana argue that the continuous practice of cultural rituals and African religion was seen as significant because the core values of “African cultural

practices” sustained society for decades and continues to do so in many African communities. Although many may identify as ‘Christian’ or ‘modern’, there is still a connection to tradition because many people are socialised in a very cultural community, which merits those who acknowledge their ‘identity’ as Zimbabweans. For Shona men, being able to adhere to culture and perform within expected structures of manhood in relation to being the ‘provider’ and ‘head of the household’ remains significant in post colonial Zimbabwean society. Drawing from the use of *lobola* as an example, it can be argued that the practice of African rituals and customs is therefore at the core of family dynamics and individual identities. I argue that for Shona men “the wedding/*lobola* is indeed a moment in which certain cultural awareness’s and identifications are crystallised and anxiously ritualised. But rather than seeing evidence there of a system of rules and avoidances, the wedding/*lobola* might be theorised as a moment in which people are invited to position themselves as cultural beings, to place themselves within the performance of culture in ways that involve placing themselves within spatio-temporal, discursive boundaries” (Mupotsa; 2014; 22).

Theoretical conclusion 4: Negotiation of intersectionality creates a zone of tension for Zimbabwean men

“I take the position that each individual experiences and makes sense of his or her world from a position located at the intersection of a multitude of competing, shifting, fragmentary, complementary and often contradictory identities alongside gender such as race, age, class, ethnicity, religion, age and sexuality” (Clowes; 2008; 4).

The main aim of my study was to explore theories on masculinities in African contexts though researching religious men’s representations of their understandings of *lobola* and their experiences of its processes as they intertwine with their religious and economic lives as migrants. I firstly argue that the process of negotiation through religious, economic and cultural trajectories is a complex one which creates zones of tension for Zimbabwean men. As articulated by Collier and Messerschmidt “the evidence on global dynamics in gender is growing, and it is clear that processes such as economic restructuring, long-distance migration, and the turbulence of “development” agendas have the power to reshape local patterns of masculinity and femininity (Connell, Messerschmidt; 2005;

850). Through my research process I explore if and how issues of economic restructuring, migration, religion and tradition have changed hegemonic views of masculinity for Shona men living in South Africa and how they negotiate these aspects in relation to practices such as marriage as well as how this informs their daily practices as men.

“Both my religion and cultural identity do hold significance.... Both religion and culture represent a history from which lessons can be learnt and how to mould one’s character.” –

Participant **HD**

Although my initial expectation was that as a Zimbabwean man, beliefs about culture and religion would place men in complex structures which create tension for those who chose to uphold both, this was not the case. From participant responses, they indicate that a combination of both religious and traditional discourses jointly shaped their ideas of how to live as a 21st century Zimbabwean man. They further argue that one’s character is therefore built through a process of adopting lessons from religion and culture. The assumption that there would be a conflict when men attempt to negotiate with traditional practices of marriage and those of a Christian was therefore incorrect. Although participants identify as Christian, they all acknowledge that *lobola* is a traditional practice which is central to marriage and some further argue that a form of *lobola* is referenced in the Bible. Furthermore, despite aspects of ‘morality’ and ‘goodness’ and traditional practices being seen as bad or ‘ungodly’ especially in colonial times when Christianity was introduced, this was not the case for my participants who adopted both practices as part of their lives. Participants therefore argue that as modern day Zimbabwean men, there is significance to upholding both beliefs.

The use of *lobola* as an example of a Zimbabwean cultural practice is an interesting and multifaceted space in that it highlights complexities which arise from identifying as an ‘African’ man, and how one is placed in a space where they have to perform in accordance with specific ‘masculine characteristics’ which are informed by social and cultural practice. I argue that assuming the role of provider and being economically independent is the main reason for tension when negotiating ideas about masculinity for Zimbabwean men. I argue this for two reasons: firstly, the issue of ‘paying’ *lobola* for example was discussed as a crucial yet stressful point in participant’s lives as Shona men;

and secondly because changing economic and political climates did not affect the practice of *lobola* in terms of what it means to marry symbolically and materially. I argue that for Shona men, the social expectation that being unprepared financially hindered a man from being able to marry created a profound burden for men to negotiate. I do however highlight that social changes such as migration, urbanization and industrialisation have affected the essential communal way in which *lobola* was traditionally practised in pre-colonial eras. Instead men are now required to raise funds for themselves to pay *lobola* (sometimes with the help of immediate family) which places an additional burden on men when deciding to marry. As highlighted by Kabeer (2007) “markets today not only operate on a scale that is unprecedented in history, they also penetrate spheres of life that were once considered the antithesis of market principles: the spheres of family, reproduction and the domestic economy...the social consequences of the liberal market economy has a great deal of bearing on the reconstitution of the boundaries between personal and economic life that is taking place in the global economy today” (Kabeer; 2007; 12). Therefore, the fact that a man’s ability to marry and be seen as a ‘real man’ by family and society is directly influenced by his access to resources is made especially frustrating for Zimbabwean men negotiating within spaces of economic and political demise. I conclude that Zimbabwean men who are from less privileged groups or poorer men who do not have access to resources “are most affected by the ‘crisis in masculinity’ since they are least able to live up to hegemonic models of masculinity which promote the idea of men as the power brokers, providers and household heads of society” (Kabeer; 2007; 54).

I argue that exploring Shona men’s representations of their personal experience of *lobola* is therefore a useful way of illuminating how personal, social, political and economic factors “act with, and not independent of each other” to define masculinities in contemporary Zimbabwe (Meintjes-Moakes; 2012; 135). My research therefore suggests that while manhood—cultural images of what it means to be a man and a father—does impact on what men actually do in the family, the practice of manhood “is equally shaped by the economic context within which it unfolds” (Chereni; 2015; 2).

Conclusion and recommendations for future research

Based on my interest to further understand aspects of 'African' masculinity which I argue have not been thoroughly explored, I was drawn to develop literature which investigates ideas about African masculinities and how narratives of their experiences can contribute to a better understanding about gender normativity. My particular interest was in exploring how Zimbabwean men negotiate their identity as "African" and "Christian" especially in the context of partnership of marriage. I argue that there has not been a great deal of attention in the development of literature on the effects of cultural practices such as *lobola* on masculinity, especially in relation to intersectional aspects of religion, marriage and economic migration. My literature review therefore explored ideas around what it means to be a "man"- and whether 'Christian men' or family men assume a hegemonic masculine identity when seeking to marry or pay *lobola* in Zimbabwe. Although my research uncovered certain arguments on the topic, a broader view will require further study.

I found the study of interrogating men's voices and experiences valuable to understanding different effects on masculinity which shape ideas about manhood and gender normativity on an 'African' context in the 21st century. My analytic chapter presented the argument that aspects of intersectionality have shaped men's identity especially what it means to be a man in the relation to culture, economic independence and Christianity. Although the subject of *lobola* is a complex practice to explore due to social debates on its traditional significance and current critique, participants argue that it is a simple process of marriage which does not cause clash with their identity as Christian. I further argue that *lobola* is an intrinsic part of marriage which precedes the "white wedding" for most Shona men. Although my participants are seen as 21st century men, their value on both culture (and religion) is especially important to shaping individual identity as well as family structure, whether directly or indirectly. I argue that instead of a tension developing from upholding both Christian and cultural values, complications arise when negotiating what it means to marry and be a man in contemporary society due to continuously changing social, political and economic climates. These changes have also directly affected social ideas of 'manhood' especially with regards to the meaning and significance of ritual in current Zimbabwean society. I envisage that this study has further contributed to developing literature which explores how different aspects of society, religion and culture contribute to shaping ideas about modern day masculinity for migrant Zimbabwean men.

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