

Lobola: Black students' perceptions of its role on gender power dynamics

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ABSTRACT

The lobola system appears to be an important part of African marriages and continues to be endorsed and applied across generations. The practice has, however, been questioned with regards to the promotion of gender equality and its continuation has cast doubt about the attainment of gender equality within the cultural context in which it is practiced. In light of this socio-political concern regarding gender equality, this study explores perceptions of a South African university sample, self identified as belonging to an African culture, to gain insight into their perspective on the importance of lobola and its role on power negotiation among married couples. The study aims to compare the perceptions of women and men in the study to establish whether gender may play a role in shaping one's perspective. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and audiotaped, transcribed and analysed using thematic content analysis to extract themes. The main themes that emerged are traditional and modern conceptions of gender equality, the relevance of lobola, the impact of lobola, the commoditisation of women and the appeal of culture. The findings indicated a general difference in perspective between women and men. Both women and men expressed the importance of adhering to culture. However, most men were opposed to the practice than women. In spite of this opposition, men expressed willingness to pay lobola if it were expected of them. Women were more in favour of lobola and, while they were aware of women's compromised power positions within the practice, they appeared to have strategies to overcome its shortcomings.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (Research & Coursework) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Sebenzile Nkosi

____ day of, _____ 2011

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DEDICATION

For my son, José.

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INTRODUCTION

Brief Background and Rationale

South Africa has been characterised by rigid divisions in the past, the most prominent being apartheid, where different individuals were advantaged or disadvantaged according to the racial group they fell under (Agatucci, 1997). During these times, black people were the most disadvantaged in the country while white people were the most advantaged. During the struggle for black people to be equally respected and advantaged as white people, black women did not prioritise gender inequality issues for fear that, firstly, it would cause a divide between the male and female freedom fighters and, secondly, it would divert attention away from the race struggle. Racial liberation was more important at the time than gender liberation as such prioritising was perceived to foster a common goal in a larger group and therewith, an increased influence (Basu, 1995).

In the 1990's the racial liberation long sought after finally came to be realised, the first democratic election became a reality (Agatucci, 2006). Having won the racial struggle meant that black women could finally bring their issues across in an effort to tackle the gender inequalities they had endured. Women's movements arose and were concerned with deconstructing gender power imbalances that were perceived to exist between women and men, and they aimed at influencing legislation through lobbying and activism against women oppression (Basu; 1995; Kiguwa, 2004). This effort was only minimally successful given the oft-observation that while women's rights are impressive on paper they are not implemented in society and thus they are not as effective as aimed (Commission on Gender Equality [CGE], 2005; Kiguwa, 2004). Kiguwa (2004) also notes that the South African post-apartheid constitution, particularly its gender equity laws, is perceived to be one of the most liberal in the world. Implementation of gender policies has the potential to overcome the power struggles between women and men; still, implementation remains a challenge (CGE, 2005).

It is also worth noting that considering the differential privileges between black and white people in the past, black women's gender struggles are arguably different from white women's gender struggles. Black women are perceived to suffer from a triple oppression; that is racial, gender and financial oppression (African National Congress Women's League [ANCWL], 1980; Mama, 1995). Therefore, a criticism against mainstream, Western developed theories is that they claim a sisterhood among all women whereas black women have a different background within the women struggle that cannot be addressed by mainstream movements and theories (Aina, 1998). Some contemporary mainstream theories, however, have considered the diversity of women's experiences and have stressed the importance of paying attention to the similarities as well, similarities that may be more significant than the differences in the end (Tong, 1989). This concern may be similar to that which the black women had during apartheid; that perhaps different interests in a group are better dealt with at a later stage in order for the basic similar focus to have a stronger impact as resulting from a larger group. Similarly, perhaps the basic gender equality struggle is similar for black and white women and this may be an important stepping-stone towards tackling the exclusively black women issues.

When one considers the problem of policy implementation, it seems that while there may be a different focus as to which policy is important for the different racial groups, the challenge of policy implementation faces both black and white women. The policy of interest in this study is concerned with black women as it concerns a practice within the customary marriage in African culture. Studies have shown that the practice of lobola continues to play an important part in African marriages (Modo, 2002; Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997) and this led to the passing of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act in 1998. Lobola is a customary practice of marriage where the bridegroom's family and kin transfer certain goods to the bride's family in order to gain certain rights over the bride (CGE, 2005; Tambiah, 1973). The rights gained by the groom and his kin over the bride include uxorial, i.e. domestic and sexual, and childbirth rights (Parkin, 1980). The continued value placed on lobola has been particularly surprising to Mwamwenda and Monyooe (1997) considering the cultural integration currently promoted and taking place in South Africa.

This study is thus concerned with the continuing practice of lobola in the midst of gender policies that seem to encourage a different perspective. Firstly, from a cultural perspective, it seems important to explore the reasons behind the continuing practice in the midst of a changing society and multicultural exposure, particularly for the young generation as this may imply a strong cultural adherence among African individuals. Secondly, from a gender equality perspective, it seems important to explore whether the lobola practice may play a role in unequal power within marital couples as this may imply an esteemed focus on culture over gender issues within African culture.

Research Aims

The aim of this study was, firstly, to explore perceptions of young African women and men of the University of the Witwatersrand regarding the role of the lobola system on gender power dynamics within modern society. Secondly, it aimed to explore whether these perceptions are similar or different between the male and female participants.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis begins at chapter one where a review of literature concerned with power, gender and acculturation is presented and an argument is made for specific models on which the study has been based. The second chapter is concerned with the methods that were employed in the study and argues for the appropriateness of these methods for this particular study. The third chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The fourth, and final, chapter provides a summary of the study's findings, discusses limitations that were observed in the study and offers recommendations for future studies based on the presented limitations.

CHAPTER 1: POWER, GENDER EQUALITY AND LOBOLA

Introduction

Marriage is a universal institution where a couple is officially united and becomes a family. While the marriage institution is universal, its practice differs between cultures (Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997). These differences are quite significant in a country like South Africa where customary (including, but not limited to, African) marriage has been lawfully disregarded in favour of civil/Christian (Western) marriages in the past (Albertyn, 2004). 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 in the case of African marriages. How this practice impacts on possibilities of gender equality between married couples has been questioned; the assumption being that by virtue of paying lobola, the husband is awarded more power in the marital relationship (Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997).

In spite of reservations emanating from the perceived impact of lobola payment on relations within the marital couple, this practice continues to be an essential part in many African people’s marital unions (Modo, 2002). On the basis of this and the post-apartheid South Africa’s articulated respect and tolerance for different cultures, customary marriage, and therefore the practice of lobola, was given legal recognition in 1998 when the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act was passed (Albertyn, 2004; Commission on Gender Equality [CGE], 2005). This Act recognises non-Western forms of marriage that occur within the African and other non-Western customs. On the other hand, the Promotion of Equality and Unfair Discrimination Act was passed in 2000 and it prohibits unfair discrimination on grounds of (although not limited to) gender, including discrimination based on traditional, customary or religious practices (CGE, 1997; CGE, 2005). The latter act, if implemented, could act as a buffer against practices that may seem to reinforce gender inequality, such as lobola, that are promoted by the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (CGE, 2005).

The persistence of the lobola system is significant considering that democratic changes in South Africa promote financial freedom of previously disadvantaged groups. The financial freedom is aided by access to education, and freedom for people to choose their career path without political interference (Agatucci, 2006). In other words, South African democracy is based on the liberal perspective that people must be given an equal opportunity to take their part in the economic market, and the state intervenes in so far as ensuring that 'equal opportunities' take into account that some people have been previously advantaged over others (Eisenstein, 1981). The state monitors equal opportunities in the economic market through affirmative action, where people's disadvantaged background is taken into account as far as their educational and job opportunities are concerned. Black women's equal opportunity is based on government's recognition of black women's triple oppression based on race, gender, and class. Black women are part of the previously disadvantaged groups that are most supported through government interventions to ensure their financial freedom (Kiguwa, 2004). In light of the reality that women are exposed to the same financial opportunities as men, the one-directional payment of lobola would seem no longer valid in a context where women are, generally, equally capable of paying it as well. The persistent expectation of the one-directional payment appears to be opposed to the gender equality policy that aims to promote equal sharing of responsibilities within couples (Albertyn, 2004).

Capitalism appears to have formed a major part of the South African standard of living; this is witnessed through the country's promotion of education, skills and financial freedom. 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 fulfilment. 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). The lobola practice is part of the African culture and is, therefore, within a collectivist belief system. It seems that an orientation to the lobola system, at least for the current young generation, requires a negotiation of conflicting cultural values. In this light, a contemporary emic (or native perspective) interpretation of the enduring lobola practice,

becomes an important factor to explore. An emic perspective is one that critiques a culture in its own right rather than in comparison with another culture; the latter is an etic perspective and has become a criticism often levelled at Western theories regarding African culture, tradition and practices (Mkhize, 2004).

The theoretical frameworks, viz. power, acculturation and socialist feminism, adopted in this study are notably fundamentally different as will be evident in their individual discussions, however they have aspects that are similar and therefore make them appropriate for integration. Firstly, they all have a similar conceptualisation of power, that is in society one entity has power over another and the powerful group seeks to maintain this unequal power balance as it yields certain benefits. 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 terms of acculturation it refers to positioning of multiple cultures, that one culture is likely to be more prestigious than another in a plural society. Finally, in socialist feminism it refers specifically to gender, that men generally have power over women. Secondly, all these frameworks advocate for an equal balance of power with the power model and socialist feminism envisioning an attainment of healthier and fair societal or gendered relationships, respectively and the acculturation model an attainment of the integration acculturation strategy that brings about a sense of cultural balance and fulfilment. These notions are applied to the lobola practice, looking at power (im)balances potentially imposed upon married women and men as explained by the power model and relating this to acculturation and socialist feminism.

The theories briefly discussed above guide the study and therefore a more detailed discussion is appropriate. The discussion begins with describing the practice and procedure of lobola, then a review of power models follows and thereafter models that explain individuals' negotiation of multiple cultural values. The discussion then shifts to gender theories to explain the dynamics of sex differences as they translate into social notions of gender. Thereafter the feminist perspective argued for in this report is discussed and its criticisms critically engaged with. A theoretical engagement with the

lobola system then follows and the chapter ends with a broader African worldview, which contextualises the lobola system within an emic pre-capitalist perspective.

Lobola

Lobola is a cultural practice that forms an important part of African marriages (Goldschmidt, 1974; Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997). It precedes the wedding ceremony and, according to Goody (1973), gives certain rights to the groom over the bride within their marriage. Mizinga (2000) states that the practice has a history of being misrepresented by Western scholars whom have criticised it as an economic transaction that implies a purchase of the bride. Driberg, Stockham and Young (1930) and Raglan (1930) engaged in a debate regarding the purposes of lobola payment, with Raglan (1930) arguing that it is an economic transaction that gives the groom control over the bride whereas Driberg et al. (1930) argued that there is a deeper cultural meaning than the surface appearance of an economic transaction. Driberg et al. (1930) argue that the focus is not on the wealth that the bride's family receives and that if it were possible to exchange a girl for another between the families, then it would not be necessary to have a transfer of goods from the groom's family. However, the girl-for-girl exchange is not possible, they argue, because the exchange has marriage implications therefore the arrangement would impede on an individual's choice of a marital partner. Driberg et al. (1930) and Mizinga (2000) argued that the term bride-price misrepresents the purpose and meaning of the practice, since price denotes buying and therefore that the husband owns the wife, a meaning that they found was unrelated to that of their participants. Lobola, then, is now largely referred to as bride-wealth.

The practice

The lobola practice is as varied as there are African cultural groups that practice it and its procedure and meaning changes through time (Ansell, 2001). In the official African languages of South Africa, it may also be referred to as bogadi, bohali, xuma, lumalo, thaka, ikhazi, magadi or emabheka (CGE, 2005). Ansell (2001) points out that regardless of context-specific variation, all lobola systems serve multiple purposes. Firstly, lobola

ensures an ongoing distribution of productive and reproductive resources. In traditional times where a lot of production occurred on land, growing crops and livestock, the groom's family paid lobola on his behalf and in exchange he had to work on his family's land as a means of repayment. In other instances, if the family could not afford to pay the lobola, the bride's father negotiated for a period where the groom could work on the father-in-law's land as a means payment. In this way, lobola ensured the distribution of productive labour from men. On the other hand, the rights over the bride's productive and reproductive labour are transferred to the groom and his family. She takes care of the groom and his family in terms of fulfilling the homemaker role and she further bears children for the groom's family (i.e. the children borne become part of the groom's clan or lineage) (African bride, 2007).

Secondly, lobola helps with the establishment of a relationship between families. It takes place over a long period of time therefore the families spend a great deal of time together and get to know each other fairly well before the marital union. While in Western culture a marriage primarily concerns the couple (Mizinga, 2000), in African culture, the bride and groom's families form as important a part of the marital union. It is, therefore, important for the families that are being brought together by the union to build a relationship and the long negotiation process between the families aids in this regard (Goldschmidt, 1974; Ngubane, 1981). Further, a daughter's lobola is often used to pay for a son's lobola, such that while the bride's family loses a daughter (productive labour) and her offspring (reproductive labour), they also get a daughter-in-law who will expand the family with her offspring, therefore closing the so-called gap created in the family by the daughter's departure. Most importantly, lobola brings about a transfer of rights from the woman's family to the man's family regarding the woman's procreative capacity (Ansell, 2001). If a groom (and his family) do not pay lobola for whatever reason, the marriage is not recognised by the bride's family, the groom has no claim over the children that he bears with the bride, and if he has daughters he cannot share in their lobola when they reach marriageable age (Mizinga, 2000).

Thirdly, lobola has been seen to ensure social control between generations and between gender groups. The older generation's primary involvement with lobola translates into the young couples being in the older generation's guidance. Further, negotiations occur between men of the families and therefore men's power in society is reinforced. Like Ansell (2001) puts it, the negotiation is between the gift-givers and therefore women, being the gift of exchange, are not part of the relationship but rather a means to the relationship. He further highlights that through the exchange women cease control of their bodies to the husband, owing to their reproductive rights being given over to the husband and his family. This implies that women have no control as to when or if they want to have sexual intercourse, when or if they want to have children as well as the number of children they want to have.

Lastly, lobola has been an important aspect of claiming a cultural identity, it is one of the practices that represent being African (Ansell, 2001). Ansell (2001) argues that many African people justify lobola's continuation on the basis that it reinforces the African culture identity. However, there seems to be a blind following of the practice such that its relevance and relation to wider socio-political issues, such as patriarchy and gender equality and the meaning attached to the economic transaction in a capitalist society, is downplayed (Ansell, 2001).

The procedure

In the African culture, when a man reaches a point where he feels he wants to get married, he informs his family of his intentions (Ansell, 2001). Representatives from his family, usually uncles from the father's side, go to meet with the prospective bride's family. They introduce themselves and mention the purpose of their visit, which is to ask for the daughter's hand in marriage. The daughter referred to is then called in to identify the groom's family. If she does, then a date for negotiations is set to allow the bride's family to form a team of representatives who will negotiate a suitable price for the daughter. At the next meeting, the groom's family brings a customary gift for the future bride's father (Mizinga, 2000). The father attends the negotiation meetings together with his team of representatives, usually his brothers and or uncles. A representative from each

side does most of the talking, relaying the ideas of the rest of the group. The father of the bride, with advice from his representatives, decides on the lobola price for his daughter and his representative conveys the price to the groom's representatives. The family of the groom then either agrees to the price or negotiates for a lower price (Goldschmidt, 1974; Mizinga, 2000).

Since the bride's family aims to get the maximum price for their daughter and the groom's family wants to pay the minimal, negotiations usually take a long time before there is agreement between both families (Goldschmidt, 1974). Some of the things that increase or decrease lobola price is the woman's manners and reputation in terms of respect for elders and men, her ability to endure house labour and whether she has children or not (Mizinga, 2000). If she has a child or children with another man, then the lobola is reduced. On the other hand, if she has a child or children with the groom then the lobola is set higher. The high price is a means to penalise the groom for not having followed procedure of paying lobola before impregnating the bride. Nowadays, the woman's level of education also counts (Mizinga, 2000). Women, including the future bride, are not part of the negotiation process at all. After identifying the groom's family, the bride has no influence in the negotiations (Ansell, 2001). In rare cases, the families may not ever reach an agreement and since in the African culture, which is collectivist in nature, (Mkhize, 2004) the relationship between the families is esteemed over that of the couple, unresolved disagreement between the families means that the couple may not get married.

Power models

Power is a concept that has been a concern for many sociologists dating back from the periods of Max Weber and Carl Marx. A number of power models have stemmed from the terrain of sociology (Lukes, 2005). In view of Lukes' (2005) *Power: a radical review* it seems that conceptualisation of power has been applied predominantly to society as a whole with no specific focus on gender groups. The models reviewed in this section, therefore, do not address gender power directly but deductions can be made as to how

they can account for and illuminate the power dynamics between and within gender groups. Tichenor (2005) makes a similar deduction from Lukes' (2005) work in her study concerned with gender equality in dual earning couples. The discussion proceeds with a review of three models of power, viz. one-dimensional model, two-dimensional model and three-dimensional model.

One-dimensional model

Dahl (1957 as cited in Lukes, 2005) captures this model's conceptualisation of power as "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do". This model's conceptualisation of power focuses on observable behaviour and overt conflict. Whether someone has power in a relationship can be determined by the extent to which their interests prevail over the interests of the other party in reaching a decision about a certain issue. Decision-making is therefore a primary measure of power distribution within a relationship. According to gender policies in South Africa, where A and B are individuals in a marital relationship, their interests should be, to the greatest extent, equally influential in reaching decisions regarding certain issues such as childbearing and control of finances (Albertyn, 2004; CGE, 2005). The liberal perspective- i.e. humans are rational, autonomous and free- seems to guide this model of power thus of the view that people's wants are their interests based on the notion that individuals have the ability to decide what is to their benefit (Lukes, 2005).

Two-dimensional model

This model values the assumptions of the one-dimensional model but contends that it is limiting in its conceptualisation of power (Tichenor, 2005; Lukes, 2005). Power, then, according to this model is twofold. Firstly, power can be manifest; overtly witnessed in decision-making as perceived within the one-dimensional model. Secondly, power can be latent such that A can ascertain, consciously or unconsciously, that their preferences are unnegotiable. A thereby ensures that B does not bring issues that may challenge their preferences for fear that this will bring about conflict in the relationship (Tichenor, 2005). A more complete model of power, it is argued, should take into account both decision-making and nondecision-making as power is embedded in both. This model

acknowledges that the socio-political system is not a neutrally supportive system with the result that some individuals may represent its interests while others may differ. Contrary to the one-dimensional model, the things that people express as what they want are not necessarily, what they want. When people are aware that the socio-political system does not support their real interests they may not bring up their real interests, pretend to want something that is aligned with the socio-political system to avoid predicted negative consequences. In the context of this topic, people may adhere to the lobola system and its implications, not because they support it, rather because they want to avoid conflict that may arise if they were to express their real opinions. Thus, not being overtly opposed to the lobola system should not lead to conclusions that there is no unbalanced power as one individual's interests in the practice may be better adhered to than the other's interests. Lukes (2005), however, has criticised this model as limited even though it is an improvement of the one-dimensional model.

Three-dimensional model

Lukes (2005) criticises both the one-dimensional and two-dimensional models for their focus on observable conflict, overt and covert respectively, in their conceptualisation of power. He argues that the most effective exercise of power is when issues are prevented from even becoming a potential conflict. Rather, people can exercise power through influencing, shaping and controlling what the other wants through various means such as control of information, mass media and/or socialisation. Power can, therefore, be exercised through *A*'s preferences being conveyed as the social order, beneficial to *B* and/or reasonable. In this way *B*'s interests become aligned with *A*'s interests and, while there is no overt or covert conflict, *B*'s interests are detrimental to them because they serve *A* to *B*'s disadvantage. In this light, *A* is said to have benefitted from hidden power that the two previously discussed models do not take into account. This radical view of power contends that people's wants may be in conflict with their real interests when their wants are influenced, through ideology, to serve a benefit to one group and yet are portrayed as benefitting to the present individuals as well (Lukes, 2005). From this point of view, marriage is a means of ensuring continued socialisation by virtue of gender roles being divided between the married couple and continued modelling of these differing

roles to the children (Eisenstein, 1979). The lobola practice, as a marriage institution, in its promotion of traditional roles, may cement these roles more within a marital relationship. Since traditional roles have been found to be oppressive to women, and sometimes men (Burn, 1996; Conell, 2005; Tichenor, 2005), it appears that, where lobola is concerned, there may be power struggles amongst men and between women and men. Individuals may adhere to the lobola system because they genuinely believe that it is not harmful for either party. However, given that traditional roles are oppressive (Burn, 1996; Tichenor, 2005), adherence to traditional gender roles as prescribed by the lobola system implies a conflict of interest, of which the individuals may not be aware.

Acculturation models

Acculturation models attempt to explain people's response when they are frequently exposed to more than one culture. The two most popular of these models are the unidimensional model and the bidimensional model (Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton & Wong, 2000a; Tsai, Ying & Lee, 2000b). The unidimensional model was the first model developed to explain the process that occurs when people are exposed to multiple cultures, and then the bidimensional model was developed to counter the shortcomings of the former model (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Tsai et al., 2000a).

Unidimensional model

The unidimensional model assumes that one cultural orientation is negatively related to another such that the more one is culturally oriented to Culture A, the less one will be oriented to Culture B (Tsai et al., 2000a; Tsai et al., 2000b). Cultural orientation refers to one's feelings towards different cultures as well as the level at which one engages with these cultures (Berry, Poortiga, Segall & Dasen, 2004; Tsai et al., 2000a). The unidimensional model further contends that one culture of the multiple cultures tends to dominate the others in terms of being socio-politically perceived and promoted as more prestigious. This translates into a tendency for people to be more oriented towards the prestigious culture instead of their indigenous culture. That is, when people live in a

multicultural society like South Africa, they will assimilate to the more “prestigious” culture and adopt capitalist values.

This, however, raises a question regarding the resistance shown by African people regarding external influence against their indigenous culture, particularly the lobola system as witnessed by Mwamwenda and Monyooe (1997) in their study. Mwamwenda and Monyooe’s (1997) study shows that the issue of plural societies, i.e. societies where there is more than one culture practiced, and acculturation is a complex issue. This complexity of acculturation appears to be addressed well by the bidimensional model of acculturation to which this discussion proceeds.

Bidimensional model

The bidimensional model assumes that cultural orientations are independent of each other, thus the degree to which one is oriented to Culture A is unrelated to the degree to which one is oriented to Culture B (Tsai et al., 2000a). Theorists within this model argue that when people are exposed to multiple cultures they will engage in two simultaneously occurring behavioural changes. Firstly, they will lose behaviours, beliefs, practices, and values specific to their indigenous culture. Secondly they will gain behaviours, beliefs, practices, and values of the “prestigious” culture (Landrine & Klonnoff, 2003). These behavioural changes can result in one of four possible outcomes depending on the extent to which the indigenous culture is lost and the mainstream culture is adopted. These outcomes are referred to as acculturation strategies as they represent the extent to which an individual is willing to go in the acculturation process (Berry et al., 2004; Tsai et al., 2000a).

Broadly speaking, the acculturation strategies reflect either a preference to maintain one’s indigenous culture or a preference for having contact and participating in another culture. The first strategy is *separation* where individuals primarily identify with their indigenous culture and bind themselves to communities of that culture while avoiding contact with another culture (Berry et al., 2004; Tang & Dion, 1999). *Assimilation*, contrary to separation, refers to when individuals give up their indigenous culture in entire

preference for adoption of another culture. *Marginalisation* refers to when individuals are unable to identify with neither their indigenous culture nor the foreign culture (Berry et al., 2004; Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2001). *Integration*, the opposite of marginalisation, refers to when individuals are able to engage meaningfully with both their indigenous culture and a foreign culture (Berry et al., 2004; Dalton et al., 2001; Tang & Dion, 1999). From a cultural perspective, this acculturation model seems to account for the reason that the lobola practice continues to be favoured by some African individuals. The model posits that individuals who adopt a multicultural or separatist acculturation strategy will most likely continue to uphold traditional African values and practices, such as the lobola practice. There has been a concern, however, that the practice may undermine efforts towards breaking down rigid gender roles within marriages by virtue of the values it appears to promote.

Gender theories

Gender theorists are concerned with understanding and explaining the source of difference between women and men, at least primarily. Different theorists differ in how they make sense of the differences outlined (Marchbank & Letherby, 2007). Many theorists align themselves according to their viewpoint in the ‘nature vs. nurture’ debate. In this light, some theorists perceive a natural difference that is unchangeable whereas others are of the view that society teaches individuals to adhere to different gender specific behaviours. They argue that gender differences are changeable if one changes the content that is taught or available for learning in society (Marchbank & Letherby, 2007; Brannon, 2005). 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. The following theories, viz. essentialism and gender role theory, represent the ‘nature vs. nurture’ debate respectively.

Essentialism

A large body of knowledge regarding gender differences between women and men has been based on essentialist notions of gender, particularly in the past. Burr (1995) defines

essentialism as understanding things in the world as having their own nature or 'essence' that explains their behaviour. Simply, this means that reality constructs the individual. In terms of gender differences, essentialists argue, quite simply, that the reality of women and men being born anatomically different translates into a natural difference in women and men's behaviours and attitudes (Bohan, 2002). Studies from this framework were concerned with sex differences, primarily based on genetics, hormones and cortical variances (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2007), between women and men to account for the social differences that were evident in the behaviours and attitudes of women and men.

This has led, intentionally or not, to notions of 'biology is destiny' where women and men are perceived to be suited for specific roles and behaviours as appropriately articulated by their anatomy (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990). 'Deviance' from these roles and behaviour is labelled abnormality or illness (Weedon, 1987). 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. Essentialism leads to perceptions that women are not equipped for the workplace, which is marked by competitiveness and aggression (Burn, 1996; Weedon, 1987). The workplace is perceived to be the terrain of men who possess the appropriate characteristics to deal with its demands. Participation in the workplace is seen as aiding men in their destined responsibility of being the provider for the family (Burn, 1996; Weedon, 1987). This translates into perceptions of gender practices as being the natural order and unchangeable. What becomes most problematic is when the natural order translates into inequality where the biologically based, unchangeable differences translate into unchangeable inequality and therefore, some people being destined to be in power over others.

However, research evidence has shown more evidence for physiological similarities rather than differences between women and men which, in turn, means that physiological accounts of gender do not, at least not entirely, account for the social differences between women and men (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2007). Gender role theories thus

conceptualise gender in quite a different manner as discussed below. While essentialism perceives biological differences between women and men as amounting to gender, gender role theory perceives gender to be the social meaning attached to biological differences between women and men.

Gender role theory

This theory, also referred to as sex role theory, attempts to disentangle sex and gender. Stoller (1968) explains the difference between sex and gender as follows:

“One can speak of male sex or the female sex, but one can also talk about the masculinity and femininity and not necessarily be implying anything about anatomy or physiology. Thus, while sex and gender seem to common sense to be practically synonymous, and in everyday life to be inextricably bound together, one purpose of this study will be to confirm that the two realms (sex and gender) are not at all inevitably bound in anything like a one-to-one relationship, but each may go in quite its independent way” (as cited in Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 2007: 20).

What is apparent in this argument is that sex and gender are not as related as essentialists suppose; gender is not necessarily predictable from sex even though it seems to be the trend in society. Furthermore, individuals whose gender identity does not predictably follow their sex are not abnormal but merely adopt different gender identities that essentialist notions do not acknowledge in their limited binary view of gender, which stems from linking gender identity to biological sex identity. Sex is the biological attributes of an individual, including genes, hormonal states and sexual characteristics (Marchbank & Letherby, 2007; Brannon, 2005). Gender, on the other hand, is socially constructed and it differentiates women and men as masculine and feminine based on their biological sex (Weedon, 1987).

Sex role theory posits that women and men are assigned differing roles in society and these are referred to as gender roles. Based on their biological sex, women and men are

expected to adopt these roles as assigned within society such that men adopt 'masculine' roles and women 'feminine' roles (Brannon, 2005; Eagle, 1998). Socialisation plays a major part in the ascribing of gender 'appropriate' roles (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2007). This aspect of socialisation is ensured through the existence of certain institutions in society (e.g. marriage, family, church, schools etc.) that ensure that girls and boys learn their expected roles (Brannon, 2005). Thus, these roles are acquired through the socialisation process by means of modelling, vicarious learning and behaviour reinforcement (Bandura, 1977; Brannon, 2005). The learning of gender appropriate roles begins at birth, initially occurs within the family and later extends to other institutions such as school, media and other social institutions (Mama, 1995). As a practice that is associated with the marriage institution, a practice that seems to encourage heterosexual couple partnership and sex-based division of roles, it would seem that the lobola system plays a role in the socialisation of individuals into 'appropriate' gender roles.

There has been a concern among some gender theorists, however, that ascriptions of gender roles have unfortunate consequences between the (binary) gender groups (women and men) as well as within the gender groups, particularly men constructed as a single gender group. 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 (Tichenor, 2005). Gender structures put certain people in positions of power while putting some in subordinate positions. Gender theorists have pinpointed the salience of power relations between women and men (Burn, 1996; Tong 1989) and among men as a gender group (Mac an Ghail, 2007). A more detailed discussion of these gendered power relations follows. The discussion begins with a theory of masculinity with the aim to highlight the diversity of the concept and the implications of the diversity in power struggles among men. This is followed by a brief background of feminist theories, highlighting differences, limitations and points of convergence of some relevant feminist theories. In light of this, the discussion aims to highlight the relevance of two reconciled feminist theories for gender power struggles between women and men.

Hegemonic masculinity

The biological differences that divide women and men into male and female, respectively, are said to translate into the social binary gender system of masculine and feminine (Connell, 2002). Concepts such as gender dichotomy (Connell, 2002) and gender polarization (Bem, 1993) have been coined to illustrate the unrealistic assumption that women and men fall neatly into the masculine and feminine categories. Both Connell (2002) and Bem (1993) argue that the binary gender system creates a platform for gender inequality. Masculinity is one end of the gender polarisation while femininity is the other. Following in the trend of a binary gender system, masculinity is usually presented as a singular rather than a plural form, i.e. masculinities. This may create the impression and/or assumption that there is a single masculinity while they are actually multiple (Connell; 2004; Kimmel; 2004). According to Kimmel (2004), masculinity refers to social roles, behaviours and meanings that are prescribed for men in a given society. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is described as the masculinity that is socially and culturally valued as the ideal, dominates other masculinities (e.g. homosexual men) and subordinates women (Connell, 1995; Connell, 2004). This masculinity is the one believed by society to be the only masculinity in which case all men should identify with. In this regard, men who do not fit or follow the prescribed values and norms of the ideal masculinity are considered deviant, abnormal and/or not real men (Kometsi, 2004). Interestingly, Connell (1995) points out that most men do not fit the prescriptions of a hegemonic masculinity; it is a mere ideal that men measure themselves against and challenge themselves to become more masculine in that regard. One can infer that most men are in a constant struggle of becoming 'real' men. This begs the question whether black men perceive themselves as struggling to hold on to an eroding identity in the new democracy that is promoting women's rights and equality. This may be even more significant concerning the lobola practice, which might have previously strengthened the binary gender system, and supported a particular masculinity that has perhaps become idealised.

Feminisms

Feminists have defined the unequal distribution of power between women and men as oppression and have attempted to find, explain and breakdown the source of this oppression through their shared quest to create a society where women and men have an equal distribution of power (Tong, 1989). Feminists differ in their conceptualisation of the source of women's oppression and offer different strategies for women's liberation based on what the assumed source of oppression is. Flax (1990) notes the difficulty for feminists to reach a consensus on the notion of what gender is and how it can be studied, amongst other things, and one may conclude that this has contributed to the different branches of feminisms as indicated by the heading of this section. Although some feminists are sceptical about theoretical groupings, feminist theories can be identified as either liberal, Marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, or postmodern (Tong 1989; Wasco & Campbell, 2000; Weedon, 1987). The reason for scepticism regarding the divisions is that they are not neatly categorised since feminisms tend to be related in some aspect of their assumption and seem to draw from each other, as one branch of feminism is usually a response to a perceived inadequacy of another. It is beyond the scope of this study to review all the different branches of feminism.

The feminist theory that guides this study is socialist feminism and this will be the focus of discussion in this report. The researcher hopes that the reason for choosing this theoretical framework will become apparent as the discussion unfolds. Suffice to mention is that socialist feminism draws mainly from Marxist and radical feminisms (Barrett, 1980; Eisenstein, 1979) and therefore the assumptions and limitations of these perspectives will be reviewed within the context of socialist feminism. This, however, is not to say that the other feminist theories have no influence on socialist feminism in the least. Eisenstein (1981) argues, convincingly, that all feminisms have an element of liberal feminism since liberal feminism was the first movement concerned with women's politics and subsequent feminisms are concerned with refining liberal feminism to better account for women's inequality. Also worth mentioning is that as feminist theorists are confronted by criticisms from their colleagues, many engage in a process of re-evaluation

and refine their work. Tong's (1989) review of feminisms reveals that some theorists began their work as one kind of feminist and progressed to become more oriented to other kinds through their work. Eisenstein (1981) also engages in an argument that liberal feminism has been more radical in practice than articulated in theory and the realisation of its radical practice should lead to a radical theory. It becomes clear then that the divisions of feminisms, noted by Flax (1990), may blur in the near future and that a branch of feminism may be just one part of many, relevant, ways to perceive women's oppression. Socialist feminism is, of the different branches mentioned above, the most cognisant of the different, yet equally important, aspects of women's oppression that each branch has to offer.

Socialist feminism articulates that radical feminism and Marxist feminism offer a convincing argument regarding women's oppression however neither of the approaches are adequate on their own. They are rather complementary and serve to comprehend women's oppression and offer liberation from gender inequality only if their complementary combination is realised (Eisenstein, 1979; Ehrenreich, 1997). All the three feminist theories, viz. Marxist, Radical, Socialist, became influential in the mid 1960's and 1970's, a period known as second-wave feminism where the focus for feminist politics was the role of the socio-political system on gendering and positioning individuals (Beasley, 1999). While all three feminisms were influential in a similar time in history, radical feminism was developed first as indicated by the development of Marxist feminism based on radical feminism's shortcomings. Socialist feminism is the youngest of the three as drawing from both means it came after the two (Beasley, 1999; Tong, 1989). Since Marxist feminism draws from Marxist theory, a review of the Marxist theory is useful to conceptualise Marxist feminism. The discussion can thereafter shift to radical feminism and finally, socialist feminism.

Marxist theory

The primary concern of Marxist theory is class relations in a capitalist society. According to Marxists, class division is a prerequisite for a capitalist society such that some people, a minority called bourgeoisie or ruling class, own means of production while the rest, the

majority called proletariat or working class, also depending on the means of production for survival, must work to gain a means of obtaining some of the production (Tong, 1989). While liberals view this arrangement as a free exchange of labour for wages, Marxists are more critical and rather perceive this as a power struggle between employers and workers where employers manipulate workers into working for wages that are far less than the worth of their labour. Marx (as cited in Tong, 1989) explains that the value of commodities is precisely the labour used to produce them. A worker's labour power, or their capacity to work, is a commodity and its worth depends on what it takes to get the worker through the workday i.e. food, shelter and clothing. There is a difference, however, between the value of the worker's capacity to work and the value that (s)he produces with the commodities (s)he makes. This difference, called surplus value, is how the employer generates profit. Therefore, the lesser the wage and higher the production of the worker, the more profit the employer obtains (Barret, 1980; Ehrenheim, 1997; Hennesy & Ingraham, 1997). Profits for employers depend on the exploitation of workers i.e. paying workers less than their worth as indicated by the value of their work in commodities produced (Barret, 1980; Hayes, 2004). Regardless of the marked differential gain between the employer and the worker from production, the working class continues to work, because of the reality of job scarcity and the threat of losing their job, which in turn, is a threat to their survival (Hayes, 2004; Tong, 1989). The power of the ruling class over the working class is thus maintained for as long as means of production belong to a few, as the working class will continue to be exploited for profit gain.

The result of this exploitative relationship for the working class is alienation (Eisenstein, 1979; Hayes, 2004). Wood's (as cited in Tong, 1989) definition of alienation captures two important elements. Firstly, alienation is the experience of one's life or self as worthless. Secondly, when one's sense of meaning regarding oneself or their life is based on illusions about oneself or one's condition. The second sub-definition of alienation is significant since it points to a possibility of alienation even in the situation where one feels satisfied with one's life and may not portray or feel worthless. It focuses on individuals' obscured view of reality, which, significantly, may be influenced by political structure, referred to as ideology (Tong, 1989; Lukes, 2005). Ideology is a set of social

practices, ideas and meanings that seek to cover up social contradictions in order to present social practice as fair to all while the disadvantage to the working class is downplayed (Hayes, 2004; Lukes, 2005).

An important characteristic of alienation is an experience of things and/or persons as separate from each other while they are in fact, or should be, connected. Work, under capitalism, fragments one's existence as a unified whole in three important ways. Firstly, one is alienated from the process and the product of their labour as they do not take part in decisions about how their product should be made and what should be done with it, respectively. Secondly, one is alienated from themselves as labour becomes a benefit for the other and not a realisation of one's potential any longer. Lastly, one is alienated from fellow human beings as capitalism introduces job competition amongst individuals; individuals are likely to become rivals rather than acquaintances (Hayes, 2004). With this in mind, the discussion proceeds to how the presently reviewed aspects of Marxism apply to Marxist feminism.

Marxist feminism

Expanding on the Marxist theory, Marxist feminism is cognisant that Marxism does not attend to the issue of women's oppression and yet applicable deductions can be made from mainstream Marxism to feminist politics (Ehrenheim, 1997; Hennesy & Ingraham, 1997). These feminists perceive a class division that goes beyond the class division that mainstream Marxists identified; a class division between women and men (Eisenstein, 1979). In following Marxism's focus on work relations, Marxist feminists' attention has also primarily dwelt on women's work related concerns (Tong, 1989). The perception is that capitalism introduces an element of hierarchical value on activities through its preoccupation with capital gain. Activities that result in capital gain are valued over those that do not. Men have historically been wage earners in the family while women have been at home tending to the needs of the family. Where the lobola system is concerned, this may have translated into men being responsible for payment and women for a number of things as according to the traditional homemaker role. The distinction between productive and non-productive work, relating to men's wage earning activities and

women childbearing and childrearing respectively, is perceived as a capitalist strategy to ensure that women are not compensated for their activities even though these activities are as important. Rather than being non-productive, women's home activities are perceived by Marxist feminists as *reproductive*, an equally important activity that is prerequisite in sustaining capitalism as it ensures a continuation of labour-power through continuation of the human species. However, the importance of the activity is downplayed since its recognition means women must be paid for it. The lobola system, in its apparent promotion of traditional gender roles, seems to play a similar role of promoting capitalist values. Lobola payment seems to create an expectation that the role is the woman's responsibility, which means she receives no payment for performing it.

Marxist feminists thus give an account of homemakers as exploited in the capitalist system as well. Alienation, as discussed in the preceding section, is therefore, also experienced by women in the sense that they are also part of the exploited working class. This alienation is, however, perceived to be a worse experience for women compared to men. The argument is that the workplace is alienating for men, and women who are in the work force, but men find refuge at home through their connection with women. For women, alienation is not escapable since their intimate relations at home are the bases of their oppression. The explanation is that women's identities are formed in relation to others and fulfilment of others' needs, as is seemingly similarly defined by the lobola system. The role of the woman in the lobola system seems to be to take care of the needs of her family, physically and emotionally. This is different from the man's role whose role of taking care of the family is focused on providing material things. Tong (1989) explains from a Marxist feminist perspective that women perceive themselves valuable in as far as they meet the (physical and emotional) needs of others. Women in the lobola practice, similarly, focus their attention to fulfilling the needs of others in performing the homemaker role that is explicitly expected of them. The family-focused identity that women tend to develop is alienating since the focus on others is at the expense of themselves (Tong, 1989) as it involves an uncompensated sacrifice on their part compared to men whose physical sacrifice at work is compensated with a wage.

Radical feminism

This branch of feminism perceives patriarchy, i.e. male supremacy, as the primary cause of women's oppression (Kiguwa, 2004) and is concerned with inequality as based on social interpretations of sexual differences between the sexes and the universality of this phenomenon. The issues that have been of concern to feminists have been male authority over women, women being treated as men's property, sexual division of labour where women are assigned activities such as childrearing and personal services to adult males (Ehrenheim, 1997). The universality of these issues led feminists to analyse the biologically based social interpretations of human nature that have a historical trend (Tong, 1989). The historical sexual division of labour is perceived to create the patriarchal culture of male supremacy, where one's biological sex determines one's social role and power (Eisenstein, 1979). Women, according to radical feminists, are oppressed because of their anatomical difference to men, a difference that has been interpreted to their disadvantage by society. The focus of this difference has been on reproduction and sexuality and this focus is seemingly shared by the lobola system since the exchange for lobola payment is women's reproductive and sexual capacities.

Radical feminists conclude that reproduction is oppressive to women because of the created link between women's childbearing capacity and childrearing. Women tend to be primarily responsible for the care of their children because of an assumption that the pregnancy period allows a conception of a mother-child bond before the child is born, in other words the mother gets an advantage over the father whose bond with the child begins after birth. Furthermore, women lactate and are thus assumed to have an advantage over men because of their natural capacity to feed the child. The interpreted capacity of women to have maternal care has translated into other spheres of their social nature; the assumption is that they have an inherent caring capacity and can therefore assume the role of caregiver to all members of her family (Tong, 1989). This extension of expectations from women's reproductive capacity to maternal care seems evident in the prescribed role of women married under the lobola system where the exchange of payment includes domestic rights in addition to childbearing rights over the wife. The assumed maternal caring capacity of women has confined them in the home while men

have had the liberty to work outside of the home (Ehrenheim, 1997) and even when women are no longer confined in the home, the homemaker role remains their responsibility (Tichenor, 2005). On the other hand, heterosexual marriage, including the lobola system, as an institution, reinforces the roles of women and men through the couples' respective modelling of gender appropriate behaviours and attitudes.

Lastly, women and men's sexual roles supposedly differ dichotomously, with men being perceived to be naturally aggressive and dominating whereas women are perceived to be naturally passive and submissive (Tong, 1989). There seems to be an increased expectation of this submissive behaviour from wives married under the lobola system considering that the payment gives husbands sexual rights over the woman; this appears to imply that the man may claim or even demand these rights even when the woman is not willing to have sexual intercourse. CGE (2005) found that many participants in their study perceived men married under the lobola system as always deserving of sexual intercourse and that the wives should always be ready to submit to their husbands' sexual desires. Radical feminists have criticised the notion of dichotomous sexual roles as perpetuating male violence against women since this seems to imply a tolerance for men's demand of sexual intercourse and an expectation for women's compliance against their will. This has been linked to the society's widespread failure to acknowledge non-consensual sex among a marital couple as rape (Tong, 1989). The apparent difference of opinion among radical feminists in terms of dealing with the perceived sources of oppression is significant for this study as the critique of the one perspective adds value to better understanding of the importance of women's roles.

Some radical feminists suppose that women's liberation depends on the extent to which women can reject their unique biological attributes. These radical feminists stress that women should reject biological motherhood through technological interventions such as foetal monitoring. Others, however, perceive women's liberation to depend on their very difference from men. They assert that men have portrayed motherhood negatively in order to shift attention away from the power that it awards women. Men, they argue, realised the power of women's reproductive abilities based on the reality that

continuation of humans depend on women. Technology to prevent women from having children will further devalue women in the men's perspective; rejection of motherhood would be taking away the one thing that still makes women valuable to men.

Others have also posited that cultural norms, rather than biological mothering, dictate a woman's mothering capacities. Women practice mothering irrespective of whether they have children of their own, they are encouraged to care for others' children and old adults, a role called social mothering (Tong, 1989). Since social mothering is an attribute of the sex/gender system rather than biological mothering, these feminists argue that technological interventions will not liberate women from their (social) mothering role. Nonetheless, they agree that the choice to have children lies with the woman; rather than rejecting motherhood altogether, women need to take control of the reproductive process, through contraception, abortion and sterilisation, that appears to confine them to certain roles such as childrearing which reflects men's control of the process. In the case that women decide to have children they can counter the maintenance of patriarchy by raising their children with feminist values (Tong, 1989). It is questionable whether women married under the lobola system can claim decisions regarding childbearing if lobola payment signifies the husband's claim over reproductive rights.

Socialist feminism

Merging the two-abovementioned perspectives to better capture the different forms of women oppression in a unified theory has not been an easy process for socialist feminists (Barrett, 1980; Ehrenheim, 1997). Ehrenheim (1997) acknowledges that the two perspectives may appear irreconcilable and socialist feminists have acknowledged that socialist feminism should not be a simple merging of the two perspectives. The resultant merger has thus taken the point of difference into account; socialist feminists have engaged critically with both perspectives resulting in a perspective that draws on the strengths of both perspectives while countering their shortcomings (Eisenstein, 1979). Marxist theory has been criticised for having been largely ignorant to women social issues and its application to the theory of a feminist politics becomes a merely force-fitted explanation (Tong, 1989; Ehrenheim, 1997). Radical feminism, on the other hand, has

been criticised for its overgeneralisation, and obsessive application, of patriarchy, i.e. male supremacy (Eisenstein, 1979; Tong, 1989) to different historical periods, different cultures and woman oppression (Kiguwa, 2004).

Socialist feminism sees patriarchy and capitalism as feeding off each other, the one necessitates the other's existence. Radical and socialist feminists agree that patriarchy precedes capitalism contrary to Marxists who believe that the two systems emerged together (Eisenstein, 1979). According to socialist feminists, patriarchy organises society in a sexual order, which awards men with more political control over women (Eisenstein, 1979). In a similar way to the radical feminists' position, socialist feminists agree that women's biological roles, particularly reproductive and sexual, have been socially interpreted to give men power over women, promoting passivity and dependency of women towards and on men. Socialist feminists, however, think radical feminists are blind to the connection this had with capitalism. Socialist feminists posit that the ultimate purpose of patriarchy is to keep women at home to ensure a continued uncompensated nurture (husband and children) and supply of the workforce (bearing children) to ensure the continuation of capitalism (Barrett, 1980). Therefore, it seems that women are significantly confined to their homemaker, sexual and reproductive roles in a political effort to maintain capitalism, roles which are concealed as women's natural and unique abilities. The exploitation of homemakers under capitalism makes them vulnerable to alienation similarly to the working class as discussed under Marxism theory.

A socialist feminist account of women's alienation contends that women are, firstly, alienated from themselves since their sexuality is for their partner's enjoyment as they tend to respond to men's needs and standards of sexuality in following their role of being passive and submissive, as opposed to men's aggressiveness and dominance, in sexual relations. Secondly, women are alienated from fellow women as they compete for men's attention in terms of being attractive. Thirdly, women are alienated from the product of their production, in terms of reproduction, when the decision to have or not have children and how many children a woman wants is taken away from her. Lastly, women are alienated from the process of childrearing since there are socialist, and even expert,

prescriptions of ‘good’ which women must adhere to in order to be ‘good’ mothers rather than mothering from their own instincts (Tong, 1989). At this stage, it seems that women married under the lobola system may be subject to two kinds of alienation, viz. alienation from self and from their product considering that lobola signifies shedding control over their sexual and reproductive capacities.

A criticism against anticapitalist feminism, such as Marxist feminism and socialist feminism, is whether all women can be one class considering the different lives that women are faced with in terms of their socialist background. Race and economic status have been the most pondered over in terms of women’s unity in their capitalist patriarchal struggle against oppression. Socialist feminists agree that taking note of differences and how a feminism applies to a certain group is important as background plays a role in the kind of feminist politics that one engages with. Ehrenreich (1997) points out, for instance, that an anticapitalist feminism is less appealing to wealthy women compared to poor women. On the other hand, an antipatriarchal feminism may be unpopular with groups that are still engrossed to preindustrial patriarchal values. Mainstream feminists warn, however, that concentrating on the diversity of women over their similarities compromises the political stance of feminism, for feminism as political action cannot have much effect if it represents lives of only a few women other than most women. This has however been the criticism of subsequent theories following socialist feminism. One of these perspectives is called African feminism, which appears to be an important aspect of this study in terms of its context and its criticism of mainstream feminism of which socialist feminism is part.

African feminism and gender equality

In socialist feminism, the rigid division of socialist roles is perceived to disadvantage women in two ways. Firstly, in complying with the division of roles, this means they need to depend on the husband for financial support and men may use this financial dependency to oppress and control women (Kiguwa, 2004). This disadvantageous outcome of the gender roles has, however been noted for women and there have been

efforts to counter it which brings across the second disadvantage for women with the rigid division of roles.

Many women are now financial providers for their families as well; women have willingly adopted a traditionally male role. It seems that women and men usually share the provider role whereas the role of being homemaker and nurturer continues to be solely the woman's responsibility (Milkie & Pentola, 1999; Tichenor, 2005). Women, therefore, have an added responsibility than their male counterparts. These multiple roles are usually overwhelming to women, as witnessed in Milkie and Pentola's (1999) study conducted in the United States of America, Maryland, where it was found that women felt less able to balance their work-family responsibilities than their male counterparts did. Gupta (1999) concluded that marriage is more beneficial to men than it is to women where family responsibilities are concerned and maintains that this is attributable to the socially prescribed gender roles. The findings of Milkie and Pentola's (1999) study, which found that women's housework responsibilities increase while their male counterpart's decrease when they form couple households such as marriage, appear to support Gupta's (1999) conclusion.

However, some African feminists argue that gender role conflict in African marriages is attributable to the influence of Western standards (Aina, 1998). Afonja (as cited in Aina, 1998) argues that within an African, non-capitalist society which is not influenced by Western influences, there is no disadvantage in adopting the opposite roles production/reproduction, domestic/public, and productive labour/domestic labour just as there is no disadvantage in being male or female. Aina (1998) argues that women exposed to education adopt Western standards, conceptualise their gender roles in similar terms as Western women, and begin to demand economical success. Thus, socialist feminism, is perceived to be disempowering African women in that it promotes a negative perception of women's roles (Sofola, 1998). Unfortunately, Aina (1998) does not relate this back to the gender roles in consideration of the reality that, while she may convincingly argue that women and men's roles are different and yet equal, women have an additional role to perform when they enter the work force.

Women's entering the work force may not be a result of being Westernised, in the sense of abandonment of their indigenous culture, but may be a requisite for survival in the capitalist system. Capitalism has unfortunately divided the dichotomous roles of women and men and placed value on wage-generating roles over the ones that do not (Hayes, 2004). Furthermore, it has sought to conceal the real value of nonwage-generating roles in order to avoid paying homemakers thereby maximise profit gained from commodities (Ehrenrein, 1997; Tong, 1989). This has translated into men valuing their roles over those of domestic roles since they entered the workforce before women, which, in turn, translated into women's drive to enter the workforce at the realisation that their value as individuals lies with working in the public sphere, performing 'productive' work (Eisenstein, 1979). The values of capitalism, i.e. education, career and economical success, have become a prerequisite for survival in a capitalist society and it is arguable whether the different roles of women and men have remained equal within African culture when capitalism has penetrated every corner of society (Ehrenhein, 1997).

Furthermore, since capitalism has seen many women enter the work force, even the argument that women and men's roles are equal even though different no longer seems to hold. Since Aina (1998) sees the roles as equal in the case that women and men's roles are rigidly divided; when women adopt a man's role the equality in role performance becomes questionable since it logically translates into an increased responsibility for women and a decreased responsibility for men. As mentioned before, socialist feminism recognises that equal decision-making power and sharing of household tasks may be unimportant to particular women because of adherence to precapitalist cultural prescriptions. An argument that these women are disadvantaged in their roles would be considered eurocentric (Aina, 1998). In view of the three-dimensional power model, however, it becomes apparent that even women's genuine satisfaction with their prescribed roles does not necessarily mean these are in their best interests, that this in itself is another form of power of men over women (Lukes, 2005). This relates to the point made in the discussion of Marxist theory that alienation, as resulting from power struggles, can also apply to individuals' obscured view of reality.

Lobola revisited

It is significant that the groom must give some form of capital in order to attain services from the bride. In this sense, Alison Jagger (as cited in Tong, 1989), arguing from a socialist feminist standpoint, perceives a similarity between wives and prostitutes. Both wives and prostitutes, she argued, depend on men for their economic survival. While prostitutes sell their sexual services to men, wives similarly sell sexual services but also domestic and nurturing services to their husbands. This may not readily apply any longer considering that women have entered the work force and have increasingly become financially independent (Kiguwa, 2004). The wife-prostitute relation, however, may still be applicable, in terms of the lobola system, particularly since the exchange of capital for sexual, domestic and childbirth rights, is explicit compared to 'Western' marriage. Parkin (1980) also mentions that marriage payments may make the contrast between male and female roles more salient as it is apparent with lobola payments. In other words, while marriage appears to put women at a disadvantage with regards to family responsibilities (Gupta, 1999), this appears to be worse for women married within the lobola system. From this view, a wife's service to her husband is a commodity as understood in capitalist terms and thus the value of women married under the lobola system "is reduced to their market value" (Tong, 1989: 65).

If interpreted explicitly, a groom's gain of these rights means the woman relinquishes (or rather the woman's family does so on her behalf) any power over her body. This refers back to the notion of alienation discussed under socialist feminism. Alienation from self is realised in the groom's right to sex, the woman is presumably expected to respond to her husband's sexual needs irrespective of her own feelings at that particular moment. Alienation from their product is also evident as the husband's right to the woman's childbirth presumably takes away the woman's decision-making power regarding whether to have children or not and, if so, how many. Blumberg (1991) found that women in third world countries experienced more decision-making power regarding reproduction when they earned higher incomes. This points back to the notion of wife-prostitute, such that financial sacrifice by the husband goes together with an expectation

of reproductive and domestic services from his wife. The explicit exchange evident in the lobola system raises a question about its interpretation in terms of gender equality.

Even with Aina's (1998) argument (discussed above) regarding the equality of different gender roles between women and men, and the reality of the lobola system being part of African culture for which she argues, the reality of alienation is still relevant and equally applicable to African women. Women who voluntarily conform to gender roles in value of their culture are likely to have an obscured view of reality and do not recognise the unequal power distribution that is at the favour of men. The issue at hand is one of men's hidden power (Lukes, 2005), in persuading women to serve them at the detriment of women's real interests. The overwhelming 'double day' experienced by wage-homemakers is significant in this regard. The unfair expectation of women's sole fulfilment of the homemaker role is, it seems, concealed by the man's apparent sole provider role in lobola payment. This seems unfair since the man's payment of lobola is a short-term process whereas the woman's homemaker role is an endless service throughout her marital life. Furthermore, in cementing gender roles, the lobola system seems unfair, as the man's provider role is not significant beyond lobola payment compared to the woman's homemaker role. It seems then that the system ensures women's entrapment within the homemaker role their whole lives while men may be freed of their role when they have paid lobola. At face value, the lobola system may seem to be promoting the African culture value regarding gender roles, i.e. different but equal. At close inspection, though, the system does not seem to take into account that women have become providers as well, that beyond the lobola payment the man's role may be shared between the couple, and the woman left burdened with multiple roles.

The lobola system may further be unfair to women in other ways. Lobola brings money into a bride's family and thus increases the family's economy and the pricing is in the control of the older men in the family. Daughters may be encouraged to marry earlier in order for the family to secure lobola for payment of the sons' lobola (Goody, 1973). Mwamwenda and Monyooe (1997) argue that daughters may be pressurised to marry wealthy men, irrespective of their feelings towards the man, in order to ensure that the

family can demand a high price for the daughter. In the case that a marriage ends the lobola paid to the bride's family has to be returned to the groom's family, this may further disadvantage women as the bride's family may avoid divorce and subject the woman to endurance of an unhappy marriage (Goody, 1973). Parkin (1980) says that the frequency of divorce varies with the size of lobola payment, i.e. the higher the payment the less likely that divorce will occur. In view of Goody's (1973) assertion above, it seems that the higher the payment the less willing the bride's parents will be to pay it back and, thus, the more likely they will pressurise their daughter into staying in a marriage against her will. Furthermore, in the case that the divorce does occur, the daughter is persuaded, perhaps even pressurised, into another marriage since returning home impacts negatively on the family's economy. Marrying again brings another payment into the family thus the economy recovers.

Once again, the notion of alienation comes to play here considering the argument made earlier that a marital exchange of capital value for woman's services implies a woman's services to be a commodity. This level of alienation is described as a worker's lack of control over the commodity they produce in terms of when, where, how, and to whom their commodities will be sold. Alienation in this case pertains to women's lack of control concerning their marital decisions in terms of who they wed, when they wed and whether they want to remain married or remarry. In the lobola system, women's sexuality and domestic work seem to be in the control of men, sold by the bride's male relatives to the groom's family. It seems that men use the lobola system to secure their wealth, which would mean lobola has become an element of the capitalist system to the benefit of men.

Some women faced with the dilemma of staying in an unhappy marriage or remarrying against their will have been found to immigrate to cities to find work with the aim to repay the lobola themselves and claim their personal choice concerning marriage (Parkin, 1980). This seems to be in line with socialist feminist theory that women are exploited by men because of their dependence on men for economic survival (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). Thus, through gaining financial independence, women are better able to negotiate power with men, as is the case with the women discussed above. Nowadays there is an

increased number of educated, financially independent women, but this has not had a significant impact on the practice of lobola.

Considering the afore-going argument, it seems that the lobola system disadvantages women in many ways. However, this makes sense as far as one considers individuals to be completely under the control of their socio-political systems. Some theorists argue that individuals create their world as much as they are created by it (Burr, 1995; Weedon, 1987). In other words, women (and men) may be victims of the lobola system while, on the other hand, they also find ways to adapt the system to their advantage. Considering that women are in a constant struggle for equal recognition in a society that esteems men above them (Tichenor, 2005) the payment of lobola awards women status and signifies respect that they may otherwise not be shown (Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997). The 'selling' of services to men further gives an impression of equality through a joined agreement between the wife and husband. Considering that the homemaker role remains the responsibility of women, lobola payment may be the only recognition for women's hard work. Lobola may be the compensation for women's reproductive work for which Marxist feminists advocate. On the other hand, culture, and its relation to power negotiation, may explain women's tolerance of men's apparent control of their domestic, reproductive and sexual roles.

African culture and gender equality

Most African cultures are of a collectivist nature where self is conceptualised as interdependent in relation to others, i.e. the family, the community or group (Mkhize, 2004). A group identity is, therefore, more important than self in collectivist couple relationships (Quek & Knudson-Martin, 2006). This contrasts with the Western individualistic culture where couple relationships focus on egalitarian ideals such as equal rights, partnership and fairness (Quek & Knudson-Martin, 2006). Individuals from a collectivist culture are more in favour of group rather than individual goals, avoid conflict for the sake of harmony (Mkhize, 2004; Quek & Knudson-Martin, 2006) and are concerned with portraying a good image to others (Quek & Knudson-Martin, 2006).

Lobola is an important part of African culture (Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997; Ngubane, 1981), which embraces collectivist values. From the above definition of collectivist culture, it may be deduced that women will primarily be concerned with the significance of the lobola system as part of the African identity rather than their individual interpretation of it. Women who may experience the double day phenomenon may be reluctant to address it for the sake of avoiding conflict as prescribed by the culture. This is what Bachrach and Baratz (as cited in Lukes, 2005) refer to as men's covert power in their two-dimensional power model. Quite important, though, is that culture is a vehicle through which traditional gender structures are reinforced and amount to gender inequality (Tong, 1989). Significant here is that cultural ascriptions are usually accepted as the social order even if they are detrimental to some individuals within the culture. By virtue of ascribing to African culture, women and men may blindly view the lobola system favourably, the disadvantage of rigid role division that seems to lurk in the background may be completely insignificant.

Conclusion

The ability for individuals to negotiate identities within multiple cultures seems to have seen the lobola practice survive contemporary gender sensitive societies. The discussion engaged with the problems that the practice may present on a gender equality level, to the extent that it may result in steady gender role division, confine women to the home, abuse their sexual and reproductive rights and leave women alienated on all three levels identified by socialist feminists. On the other hand, there is the criticism of etic perspectives being eurocentric, failing to understand the practice within the culture in which it is embedded. The assumption of women's concealed 'real' interests within the lobola system may thus be criticised as flawed. Lukes (2005) also recognises that there may seem to be an element of researcher as expert in the lives of their participants when one argues a case of hidden power. The perspective that one's utterance is not the total meaning of their message; rather, it is the surface under which lies the real meaning of the utterance is important at this point. This perspective argues that the researcher will

only gain access to the real meaning of the message when one engages in an interpretation of what has been said rather than accepting the face value of the message. With this in mind, the following chapter discusses the method that was employed in carrying out this research study.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

Research Design

The study is located within the qualitative paradigm, which focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences in relation to the world they live in (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984). Operating from a qualitative paradigm signifies a particular way of thinking about the social world, a way that is best understood as in contrast to a quantitative paradigm. Employing a qualitative paradigm in this study requires a research design that complements the assumptions of the paradigm. The relevant assumption of the qualitative paradigm is that the world is characterised by a lot more than that which the researcher may ever (claim to) know. Furthermore, different individuals hold particularly unique meanings of the world, their meanings are not constant and the modification is attributable to an unknown number of things (Denzin, 1994). Firstly, this means that the researcher has a different meaning from the people that s/he studies and thus the claim to finding an ultimate truth is not possible. Secondly, this means that researchers cannot know beforehand what will emerge in the study and therefore should not have preconceived ideas about the phenomenon of interest. Lastly, unlike with quantitative research, the researcher need not control for other ‘unrelated’ phenomena in the study as these may well be what characterises people’s shift in thinking. Therefore, from a qualitative perspective, the ultimate purpose of research is to understand rather than explain and predict (Denzin, 1994; Henriques et al. 1984).

In view of the abovementioned assumption an exploratory design was employed in this study. This approach is employed when the research concerns entering the arena of participants’ world, discovering the unique aspects of that world and guarding against contaminating that world with the researcher’s assumptions about it (Denzin, 1994). This differs quite significantly from other approaches that seek to manipulate the individual’s world by either removing the participants from their natural setting, seek a restricted type of information based on the researcher’s existing knowledge about the phenomenon

and/or manipulate variables that are perceived important. The strength of the approach employed in this study, therefore, is that it allows for a deep understanding as the information obtained, through the researcher's keeping an open mind, is new, enlightening and a unique discovery that adds value to the body of knowledge rather than an attempt to improve/(dis)prove existing knowledge (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991; Kiguwa, 2004).

Materials

Initially, the researcher proposed to utilise a focus group schedule as way of gathering data. The appeal of focus groups for this study resides in their ability to allow for a critical debate regarding the participants' beliefs. Using focus groups would have enabled challenging participants directly or indirectly, about their point of view, while facilitating other participants' ability to openly criticise their fellow participants' points of view or place more value on their own opinions, respectively. Within such an environment, participants have an opportunity to reflect on their own perspectives and defend or reframe these accordingly. This is similar to the social environment where one forms and reforms their perceptions of the world according to other social realities (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Shaw, 2000; Burr, 1995).

However, utilising focus groups as a data gathering method later proved impossible as the data gathering process coincided with students' preparation for their examinations. They were later writing their examinations and thereafter were due for their end of year vacation. It thus became impossible to arrange a time that would suit an adequate number of participants for the focus groups that had been proposed. On practical grounds then, changing the data gathering method became unavoidable.

Instead of using the focus group schedule initially developed for the focus group procedure, the researcher developed a semi-structured interview schedule for a one-on-one in-depth interview with each of the participants. The semi-structured interview, although perhaps not as ideal as the focus group approach for this particular study, has

advantages that makes it a better replacement for the focus group procedure than any other qualitative data gathering procedure. This type of interview allows the researcher to focus the study such that participants answer questions related to the phenomenon under study. At the same time however, the researcher may clarify points that are not clear or contradictory as well as allow participants to introduce new information that the researcher may not have anticipated to be related or relevant for the issue under study (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). The semi-structured interview approach to data collection is, when employed properly and skilfully, one way of getting a thick description of the issue under study (Banister et al., 1994) as has been proposed for this study. Where the change from using focus group discussions represents sacrificing the benefits of discussing shared experiences in a group, individual semi-structured interviews provide depth of individual perceptions.

The interview schedule contained 10 questions but where appropriate and necessary the researcher expanded on the pre-set questions and rephrased for better comprehension, this possibility represents another advantage of semi-structured individual interviews. The questions were open-ended with the intention to allow an elaborate, deep description of the participants' perspective on the identified issue under study. The questions were in English, the researcher did not anticipate encountering problems of incomprehension from participants since the sample used was a student sample at an institution that uses English as a medium of instruction. The interview schedule is attached as Appendix A.

Participants

In view of the fact that focus groups as data collection method was changed to in-depth interviews, this necessitated changing the sample size for the study. Thus, instead of a total number of 32 participants with 16 males and 16 females, the sample comprised of a total number of 12 participants with 6 males and 6 females. The ideal sample size has been debated within the qualitative paradigm of research. Since the focus is in-depth illumination on a specified phenomenon, a small sample size is preferred in order to allow the researcher prolonged engagement with the participants. While there are no

strict rules regarding an adequate number of participants per study within the qualitative paradigm, most texts advice that the sample be small enough to allow the researcher to gain rich information about the phenomenon under study. At the same time, the sample should be large enough to allow for diversity of perspectives to emerge (Kuzel, 1992). Kuzel suggests that 6 to 8 data sources are adequate for a study on a homogenous sample and suggests 12 to 20 data sources when doing a comparative study.

The present study is primarily comparative as it seeks to compare the views of young African women and men regarding lobola and its role on gender power dynamics. However, since it was also concerned with in-depth information from the participants, it was felt that this should also be taken into account in deciding on sample size. The study was, therefore based on 12 participants, thereby meeting the requirement of a comparative qualitative study while at the same time keeping the size small enough to allow an in-depth description. In terms of the sampling method, there was no random selection of the participants and the non-probability sampling technique was used to obtain participants (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). The snowballing, convenience, sampling technique was used, such that a first contact was established and the contact was requested to suggest other interviewees who may be appropriate participants for the study.

The participants indicated whether they grew up in a rural or urban geographical location. In the one case where a participant mentioned having grown in more than one type then the type where s/he spent most of her life was taken into account. Furthermore, even though the phrasing of this question was a forced choice, some participants volunteered a third option of “semi-urban” to refer to their geographical location. This necessitated a third category, viz. semi-urban, as the participants’ volunteering for this option gave the researcher an indication that they did not feel that they fit with the presupposed categories. The table below gives an indication of the number of participants from each type of geographical area:

Table 1: Breakdown of sample by geographical location

Geographical location	Urban	Semi-urban	Rural
No. of participants	6	2	4

Since the aim of the study is to explore the views held by young African women and men regarding lobola and gender power dynamics, the researcher came to a realisation that using exclusively the isiZulu linguistic group, as initially proposed, would not be answering the present study's research question. The researcher thus changed the make up of the sample such that it included numerous of the official African languages in South Africa. An indication that participants were part of a linguistic group was if they regarded it as their home language or, as in a few instances where there were two home languages or the home language was not an African language, the African linguistic group they identified with the most. The table below indicates the linguistic groups that the sample represented as well as the number of participants within these groups.

Table 2: Breakdown of sample by linguistic group

Home language	SeTswana	SeSotho	SePedi	IsiZulu	IsiXhosa	TshiVenda
No. of participants	4	1	1	3	2	1

Contrary to the initial supposition that participants will be obtained from the Masters level of study from various disciplines, the participants were in their second, third or fourth year of study. This is because it proved difficult to have contact with Masters level students presumably because their curriculum has minimal lecture times that would require them to be at campus for most of their study term. Nonetheless, the researcher was still able to ensure that the participants were aged 21 years and older. The table below indicates the number of participants in the different categories of years of study as mentioned above.

Table 3: Breakdown of sample by year of study

Year of study	2 nd year	3 rd Year	4 th Year
No. of participants	2	9	1

The sample was drawn from the University of the Witwatersrand, care was taken to ensure that psychology, and other social science students did not form part of the study since they may have had academic exposure that might have influenced their opinion on the subject at hand. Participants were obtained from the Science, Commerce, Engineering and Health Sciences faculties. The table below gives an indication of the number of participants from each of the mentioned faculties above.

Table 4: Breakdown of sample by faculty

Faculty	Science	Commerce	Engineering	Health Sciences
No. of participants	6	2	1	3

Research Procedure

The sampling procedure used to select the participants for the study involved elements of both convenience and purposive non-probability sampling approaches. The convenience sampling approach was utilised to obtain a sample that was voluntarily interested in taking part in the study. This is evident as the researcher randomly approached African black students from the East, West and Parktown campuses and, following a briefing about the study, asked about their interest in taking part in the study. The purposive sampling approach was utilised to ensure that individuals who would take part in the research study would provide relevant information (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991), which would enhance the usefulness of the study outcomes. The relevant characteristics for the current study were being in the process of gaining a tertiary education; self identified as belonging to an African culture and being South African, given that the study is concerned with students' perceptions regarding lobola within the context of South Africa. In adhering to the purposive sampling approach, the researcher explained to those students who showed interest to participate that participants were to fit specified criteria

according to the focus of the study. Those who gave verbal consent were asked relevant questions to ensure that they met the set criteria of the sample as stated above. Those who did not meet the sampling criteria were informed why they could not be included, and thanked for their interest. Four of the students who were interested in taking part met the sampling criteria at this initial phase of sampling; the researcher would obtain more participants at a later stage.

At the researcher's request, a room was made available for interviewing at the Counselling and Careers Development Unit, at the University of the Witwatersrand. The arrangement for this space was made possible through the pre-existing relationship between the researcher and the unit. Following their agreement, two of the four students were interviewed in the 'interview room' at a time convenient to them. The third participant requested to be interviewed at a later stage. The fourth participant did not show up at the arranged time for the interview and the researcher concluded that he must have changed his mind about participating and did not follow it up even though, at that particular point, being turned down by a participant was a setback considering the difficulty of obtaining the sample. It was however important to be mindful of ethics and respect the participant's right to withdraw from the study.

Both interested and uninterested students were requested to inform others who may be interested in the study and met the criteria for potential participants. They were requested to refer potential participants to the researcher by handing over the researcher's contact details. Alternatively, they were also requested to appeal to others by letting them choose a time that would suit them from times that the researcher had listed as times at which she would be available. This would not compromise the already identified sampling approach as the researcher would also ask the potential participants, which were found by the participants, about their interest in the study and, if confirmed, asked the relevant questions pertaining their ability to provide useful information for the study.

The researcher received feedback, in person, from two of the three participants regarding interested potential participants they had found. A total number of seven participants had

voiced an interest and had chosen times that would suit them. The researcher made a telephonic follow-up with them to confirm whether they know what the study is about, whether they are still interested and the meeting time for the interview. The third participant set up a time for two of the potential participants and they were willing to be interviewed but preferred this to be done at their residence, as they would soon be leaving from campus residences for their year-end vacation. Interviews with these three participants were conducted at their residence on the day convenient to them. This required flexibility from the researcher considering that she had set up a venue to conduct interviews. The importance of establishing trust, humbling oneself as the non-expert researcher and valuing the participation from willing individuals proved more important than following rigid plans of gathering data. Keeping these in mind proved important in obtaining quality information from participants who were made to feel comfortable and valued, as they witnessed the earnestness of the researcher. Interviews with participants were between 30 and 60 minutes long and were audio-taped. The researcher thanked the participants for their time and contribution after the interview. The resultant taped interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic content analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was based on full interview texts, which were transcribed from the recorded audio tapes. The transcribed data were processed to prepare for analysis. An appropriate coding procedure was in place in order to reduce the transcribed data to themes and categories that would allow a meaningful extraction to be elaborated upon. This process of reduction and extraction unfolded in a step-wise process. Firstly, the researcher read all the transcripts in order to get the essence of each and issues that were deemed important, thoughts and feelings that the researcher experienced were jotted down. Secondly, information in each interview was summarised according to the point of emphasis, trends within each interview were identified. The identified trends for each data source were compared to other data sources within and between gender groups. Thus, the processed data was analysed using thematic content analysis where similar trends in the data were extracted, organised into themes and were explained and

elaborated upon (Berg, 1995; Eagle, 1998). This technique was appropriate as it is located within the qualitative , interpretive paradigm as already discussed above (see research design). Thematic content analysis allows for a reduction of large volumes of data to smaller meaningful units in order to make interpretations and draw conclusions (Berg, 1995).

Ethical Considerations

The purpose of the study was explained to the participants both in writing and verbally. The participant information sheet is provided in appendix B. Informed consent was obtained using consent forms which participants were required to sign as an indication of their consent to participate in the study. The interview consent form is provided in Appendix C and the recording consent form is provided in Appendix D. Participants were informed that participation is voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without being subject to penalties. It was also explained that the choice to participate or not would not lead to penalties nor direct benefits. Only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor had access to the research material thus confidentiality was maintained. All research material was kept in a safe place to safe guard against unauthorised access. No reference to possibly identifying information about the participants has been made in the research report as was explained to participants; pseudonyms are used throughout the report. Participants were provided with the researcher and researcher's supervisor's contact details in case that they required feedback on the study.

Having discussed the methods that were employed in the study, the discussion now proceeds to findings and a discussion of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this research study, which are presented as themes that were extracted from the interview material. Different views within the themes are examined, challenged and supported in terms of existing literature, particularly the literature that has been reviewed in the first chapter of this report. The salient themes that are discussed in this section are traditional and modern conceptions of gender equality, the relevance of lobola, the impact of lobola, the commoditisation of women and the appeal of culture respectively. Some themes are subdivided into three sub themes. The first theme ‘traditional and modern conceptions of gender equality’ is subdivided into biological basis of gender role division; cultural perspectives of gender role division and barriers to ‘cross-adoption’ of gendered roles. The second theme, the relevance of lobola, is subdivided into lobola in traditional times; lobola in modern times and lobola and the modern provider role. The last theme, the appeal of culture, is subdivided into lobola and cultural adherence; lobola, cultural change and gender equality and cultural change or cultural divorce.

This paragraph aims to orient the reader to the content of the major themes that emerged in the study. The first theme identifies the perceived differences between traditional and modern conceptions of gender equality. The theme reveals that the perceptions regard a positive transformation in the public sphere, i.e. in the workplace; however things have remained largely the same within households. Female participants advocated for gender role division to remain the same in the household while male participants advocated for a gender role breakdown. The second theme links with the first such that the views regarding the relevance of lobola appeared to be aligned with whether gender role division was perceived favourably or unfavourably by the gender groups in the first theme. Participants who viewed lobola as no longer relevant perceived it as damaging towards gender equality efforts. The third theme extends the opinions revealed in the

second theme and discusses the participants' views about the negative experiences that lobola may present for a couple in the modern period. The fourth theme looks into the reasons that lobola may be disadvantageous to women and men. The last theme looks into the issue of cultural identity and participants's positions regarding lobola and gender equality from the African cultural perspective.

Traditional and modern conceptions of gender equality

This paragraph aims to orient the reader to the content of the following sub-themes that emerged under this theme. The subtheme 'biologically-based reasoning regarding gender role division' discusses participants' reasoning regarding the assignment of different roles to women and men and the reasons for the noted change in the assignment of the provider role. The subtheme 'cultural perspectives regarding gender role division' discusses a noted persistence of gender role division in the home, cultural meanings attached to gender equality in relation to gender role division and female participants' perceived gain in women's 'cross-adoption' of the provider role. The subtheme 'barriers to 'cross-adoption' of gendered roles' discusses reasons of the noted persistence of gender role division in the household, paying particular attention to the relationship between masculinity and traditional women's roles. Furthermore, the subtheme pays attention to male participants' perspectives regarding women's 'cross-adoption' of the provider role and the impact (or lack thereof) this has on men's 'cross-adoption' of traditional women's roles.

Biologically-based reasoning regarding gender role division

It seems most participants took traditional role division for granted, as the natural order. Some participants believed that the arrangement was essential in the past since the roles were based on physical and emotional ability and the gender groups were thus divided accordingly. Men were perceived to have more physical strength than women, competitive and emotionally detached as demonstrated by the following quote:

“...guys who are more authoritative, hardcore, male, testosterone type of people...” [Mpho, Female]

Therefore, according to the participants, men were ‘rightfully’ assigned the role of being the provider. These characteristics were believed to put them in a good position to respond towards challenges for survival. The participants argued that the physical and emotional nature of women ruled them out of the provider role and thus they were assigned the homemaker role which better suited their nature. The example cited below argues for the reason that these roles were divided:

“...it’s just that in the olden days it was thought that the female are perceived as a weak species so they tend to do weak chores and the male, because of the physique can afford hard labour work type of thing which today it’s not only labour that’s required to do a certain skill you need your brain as well” [Sipho, Male]

What is significant in the quote is how the participant refers to the perception of women as weak thus having been assigned appropriately ‘weak’ roles. If one considers the latent meaning of the statement, it appears that physical strength is valued over endurance. It seems that men’s traditional roles are endorsed for their reliance on physical strength rather than women’s roles that require endurance. This perspective articulates a point that Burn (1996) makes in arguing that women’s roles are more challenging, requiring elongated engagement than men’s and yet they are less valued as the roles’ constancy gives the impression of the role performance being a natural occurrence rather than work. Tichenor (2005) also points out that the traditional division of roles award men more leisure time, which also highlights that women’s labour takes much longer to complete and yet it is seemingly less valued. A hidden power struggle (Lukes, 2005) between the gender groups seems evident here, where the significance of women’s roles is downplayed potentially resulting in a perception that men’s roles are more important and more demanding. Socialist feminists argue that this devaluing of the homemaker role is deliberate and significant for the capitalist system. Firstly, it ensures that women do not

feel deserving of financial compensation for their role. Secondly, such an arrangement ensures a class struggle in marital unions where the husband's wage awards him decision-making power. That is, the wife, dependant on the husband's resources, finds herself having to obey her husbands' desires for fear that her means of survival may be taken away from her (Tong, 1989)

The above quote also points out, however, that the division is no longer appropriate owing to society's transition into a capitalist system, which focuses on learned rather than natural skills. Moreover, the argument highlights that it is no longer necessary to reserve the provider role for men as women are now equally capable of performing it. It seems that the biological deduction concerning role division remains unchallenged in that women's 'cross-adoption' of the provider role is not so much about changed perceptions of women's physical abilities, rather the provider role has shifted from its physical focus. From a radical and socialist feminist view, shifting focus from physical attributes translates into childbearing no longer being linked to childrearing as well as social mothering. This would be to the disadvantage of men since it is in recognising physical differences that men are able to maintain positions of power over women, particularly assigning the homemaker role to women. On the other hand, if women enter the work force under the impression of a changed demand, i.e. from physical to mental, the demand on men to provide is reduced and they are still exempt from the homemaker role.

The challenge with biologically based role division, as Sipho's reasoning above, is that it makes the roles appear fixed in such a way that it becomes difficult to separate the roles from the gender group to which they have been assigned. In other words, if these roles are justifiably divided by physical/emotional attributes, they are likely to be seen as permanent and resistant to change. One of the female participants Mpho (M) alluded to this point in the following quote extracted from the interview:

M: I think for girls...for women or whatever it is more a caring, nurturing role so even if you're the CEO of whatever company you're still the caring, nurturing person

in the company versus guys who are more authoritative, hardcore, male, testosterone type of people?

R: *And what is that?*

M: *um leaders, they are more hunters if that makes sense, than we are versus us the gatherers who stay at home, make sure everything is okay..ya. I think we still follow those to a certain degree.*

Mpho seems to suggest that even though things are changing, roles being ‘cross-adopted’, performance of these continues to be influenced by one’s gender. She further seems to suggest that this a natural process which continues to exist even when times are changing. One needs to think carefully about such views as this may suggest a fixed difference that gives grounds for preference of following traditional role division. Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2007) warn that, in such situations, gender roles become natural attributes in themselves whereas they are mere deductions from, and expectations attached to, anatomy. Such essentialist notions of gender may undermine any effort of breaking down gender role division, even where there are clear challenges against these notions. In fact, considering Lukes’ (2005) argument that some groups may present inequality as the natural order, and the social feminist argument that gender inequality exists to the advantage of men, it becomes clear how biologically based reasoning of gender role division may be used to men’s advantage to foster unequal gender role division.

The challenge presented by biological reasoning of gender roles was salient in the female participants’ reasoning regarding the perceived women’s rapid ‘cross-adoption’ of the provider role than men’s ‘cross-adoption’ of the homemaker role. Most of the female participants did not perceive men’s slow-changing gender role attitudes problematic. The female participants argued that women are naturally better capable of the homemaker role. They were aware of resultant multiple roles for women, of the challenge that women face in having to balance these roles and that men are not faced with a similar challenge. The following quote sums a popular reasoning among the female participants regarding the unbalanced responsibility between women and men:

“...I suppose the woman’s role is bigger than the man’s, it’s a lot more important as they do take on a lot, unfortunately, but I don’t think any of us really look at it as being treated unfairly or as...as being unequal, I don’t think, I mean...I really don’t know how to explain it because if it’s a culture you grow up with it’s a...you know, we wake up in the morning, we make our beds, we sweep and we go to school, you know...” [Tshidi, Female]

It seems clear from Tshidi’s point that men are exempt from the homemaker role, irrespective of the woman having a more overwhelming role. In fact it seems there is an expectation that women be able to balance their roles because they are taught their responsibility from an early age. Firstly, there seems to be an underlying assumption that they are more equipped to perform the homemaker role than their male counterparts because women are socialised that way. Since homemaker socialisation seems to be exclusively reserved for women, it seems a valid assumption that socialising men in the same manner is not perceived to be necessary. Therefore, the socialisation is based on biological differences between women and men; the reasoning regarding biological differences between women and men sets the foundation for unequal gender role division. Secondly, it seems that the overwhelming nature of taking on multiple roles for women is awarded by the flattery that they are super-beings by taking on these roles and having the ability to balance them well. Lukes’ (2005) idea of hidden power seems evident here in that women being awarded the superbeing status over men in terms of household responsibilities transform overwhelming roles that may appear negative into a more positive view.

Gupta (1999) and Milkie and Pentola (1999), in their studies, point out that women are overwhelmed by sharing the provider role in addition to their homemaker role. Tshidi, on the other hand, acknowledges this notion of multiple roles but nonetheless insists that the role should continue to be reserved for women alluding to women simply being used to it as the reason. Tshidi’s seemingly contradictory argument seems to highlight Lukes’ (2005) argument that some issues are presented as the natural order for the benefit of all whereas they only benefit certain groups in society. As Tichenor (2005) observes,

women's sole handling of the homemaker role awards men more leisure time, thereby presenting inequality of handling household responsibilities for women. Therefore, through careful consideration, it seems that the roles are arranged such that they benefit men, with the biological basis of gender role socialisation cementing these as part of gender identity and thereby more resistant to change. Stoller (1968 as cited in Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2007) similarly points out that as gender is so often linked to sex it becomes difficult to separate the two over time. Further, this phenomenon may prove even more difficult in instances where gender roles are arranged such that they benefit a certain group as the benefitting group is likely to ensure continuation of the imbalance (Lukes, 2005).

The majority female participants' view appears to suggest that gender roles may be 'cross-adopted' as far as they become less dependent on gendered characteristics. The provider role has seemingly changed from being physically focused to being intellectually focused and therefore seemingly justifies women's adoption thereof, whereas the homemaker role has remained the same in its emotional focus. The male participants, on the other hand, felt that in order to achieve gender equality men need to adopt the homemaker role as women have wilfully adopted the provider role. An example of this argument follows:

"...But nowadays as we see that women are able to bring in as much money to any household...So in that it's breaking that whole tradition, stereotype that men need to do certain duties that women should not do or women sticking to some priorities that men wouldn't do..." [Sthembiso, Male]

Sthembiso highlights that women's adoption of the provider role has set pace for the need to dissolve gender roles. Having had an 'African' view that gender roles are equal although different from the female participants, it is surprising then that the male participants generally seem to hold the 'Western' view that to achieve equality then gender roles need to be dissolved completely. The egalitarian thinking held by the male participants is further surprising considering the prevalent slow adoption of the

homemaker role by men (Milkie & Pentola, 1999; Tichenor, 2005). Considering that the study was done on a student sample, however, this might suggest that the situation will be changing and there will be more gender role 'cross-adoption' in the future. The majority male participants' view may be a reflection that gender policies and women's rights activists are making progress towards influencing men's attitudes, suggesting a more egalitarian attitude and behaviour between women and men in the future. However, it becomes questionable whether a state of gender equality can be reached when women seem to continue to attach their gender identity to their anatomy. It seems that cultural prescriptions have succeeded to conceal the detriment of rigid gender roles to women even when the burden is noticeable.

Cultural perspectives regarding gender role division

The African feminist criticism against the mainstream socialist feminist view, that rigid gender role division amounts to gender inequality is rather expressive of Western women's perspective (Aina; 1998), was also held by most of the female participants as expressed in the following statement:

“Um, ya, if you’re coming from the Western culture and the woman is working and the man is working, ya. Adding on the house chores if she comes back from work and takes care of the kids on her own, ya for them I think they see it as an extra job as well. Being a housewife, as it is, it’s like...for them it’s a job, you know what I’m saying, housewife is a job, it’s not just sitting at home doing nothing so...doing the house chores and having a job um I think they would consider it having an extra load and they would...I mean, ya...I mean I can see how they’d find it...they’d see it as unequal, I don’t know what else to say, I don’t really (giggle), ya, I can see how they would see it as unequal.” [Tshidi, Female]

Tshidi clearly highlights the reasoning regarding gender roles from a “Western” perspective and articulates that it is not similar from the “African” view, as evidenced in the constant reference to “them” and “they” thus excluding her and other non-Westerners from that reasoning. Afonja makes a similar separatist argument (as cited in Aina, 1998)

that in a capitalist Western society role division may be perceived as unequal, however this is not the case with African society as the roles are not disadvantaging to either gender groups.

However, an important factor to consider in Afonja's argument is the society in which a generation finds itself. The participants in this study and other students in general, are living within a capitalist society (Agatucci, 2006) and are perhaps negotiating their cultural identity and orientation in a society that promotes multiple cultures. Afonja's argument seems to assume an African culture that is untainted by 'Western' ideals of capitalism, however, this is hardly the case since capitalism is promoted in South Africa (Agatucci, 2006) as already argued in the first chapter of this report. One may even argue that some degree of adoption of Western culture is a necessity in South Africa and the world at large since having a paying job is one's primary means of survival. Therefore, firstly, this implies that no one can truly hold a separatist acculturation strategy in such a society, especially students who are in the process of being prepared to enter the job market and earn a monetary income. Secondly, it means that a society like the one referred to by Afonja has ceased to exist as capitalism has penetrated all societies (Ehrenhein, 1997), and therefore her argument cannot readily apply to the student participants in this study.

Perhaps as evidence that the female participants were not reasoning within a separatist acculturation strategy is that they recognised an unequal balance of roles. However, they asserted that it is part of their identity as a woman to perform the homemaker role regardless of the perceived imbalance.

“Uh, nna (me) as a woman I don't think that I would expect my husband...I mean as a woman, when I get married, I have to do...I have to wash, I have to do laundry for my husband, I have to cook for my husband; that is my responsibility...”[Palesa, Female]

Palesa's argument clearly highlights the way in which the homemaker role is embedded in the woman's identity. In fact there is even a negative reaction towards women who may not adhere to this identity as Palesa continues:

"there are women ba leng hore (who), when they get married they...they bring issues of, you know, equal rights in terms of, 'I do the laundry and sometimes you cook and I cook... but I think hore (that) it doesn't work like that, as a wife you have to cook for your husband.' [Palesa, Female]

Considering the current state of South Africa, where both capitalism as well as cultural orientation are promoted (Agatucci, 2006), it seems reasonable that the participants may be divided between Western and African reasoning regarding gender equality. Perhaps more worrying is that, in a quest to prove their orientation to African culture, African individuals may find it necessary to hold on to aspects of African culture that potentially put them in compromising positions. For the women in this study, it seems that one of those aspects to hold onto is their womanhood, which in African cultural terms seemingly means an ability to fulfil the homemaker role.

The prevailing argument made by the female participants that the homemaker role is not perceived a significant role in itself leads to a conclusion that women are only perceived to be meaningfully performing a role if they are providers. This apparent devaluation of the homemaker role reflects the socialist feminist argument that capitalism places value on wage-generating work over nonwage-generating work such as being a housewife. This notion may contribute to unbalanced gender power as Tichenor (2005), observes that the benefits of the provider role are authority, more leisure time and freedom from domestic responsibilities, which are reserved for men when women do not share in the provider role. However, it seems that men benefit whether or not the provider role is shared or exclusively reserved for them. If one considers Lukes' (2005) argument that people will not realise that a social order is asserted by a powerful group for its own egotistical benefits, it would seem then that the provider role being reserved for men is for the benefit of men as it gives them power and silences women in the household. One would

then expect that men would safeguard against women adopting a role that may mean a loss of power for men. Furthermore, one would expect that the benefits of this role would be concealed to women. The fact that women are aware of the provider role's benefits (as will be discussed in a subsequent theme) and that men are generally not actively preventing women from engaging in it suggests a return benefit to men that is equal to or perhaps even greater than the benefit of reserving the provider role for men. As already discussed in a previous section, this return benefit seems to be a shared provider responsibility and no added household responsibility for men, resulting in even less responsibilities for modern men than traditional men.

Considering that the female participants were aware that adopting both roles may be overwhelming, the reason for their sharing in the provider role while aware that culture reserves the homemaker role for them becomes a concern. The female participants, however, justified their non-expectation towards gender role 'cross-adoption' as having their focus on attaining equality in decision-making power, i.e. dissolving the authoritative role awarded to men by being a provider and sharing in important decisions that affect the family (Blumberg, 1991; Tichenor, 2005). Being financially independent was considered a means of power negotiation between marital couples as suggested by one participant in the following quote:

"Women today have the opportunity to make money themselves, having their own money and things like that and ...so...it's a good thing in the sense ya hore [that] no man would come and say '...I have the power' because as a woman you still have the money" [Palesa, Female]

Clearly articulated in the quote above is the advantage of the possession of an independently earned income, which for women ascertains a position of equal power with their partner. Feminist theorists within the Marxist and terrain (Ehrenheim, 1997; Tong, 1989) support this view that money aids power. The argument, according to Marxists, is that in the capitalist system, possession of capital (nowadays money) determines who has more power in society. Thus, according to Marxist feminism, men who have more money

than their wives will gain more power in the household. This Marxist view suggests that women will be liberated from gender inequality primarily through financial independence (Tong, 1998). Quek and Knudson- Martin (2006) and Zuo (1997) support the Marxist feminism argument that marital relationships become more egalitarian as women and men become equally involved in careers and share the provider responsibility. Similarly, for the female participants in this project, gender equality revolved around financial independence.

The female participants' reasoning regarding gender equality raises important issues. It is clear that gender equality for them focuses on a more complex issue than gender role division. While gender role division is perceived unimportant, it may be that it is downplayed to focus on a more urgent issue. One participant points this out in the following extract:

“We probably have to take it one step at a time I think. Men were comfortable...they were comfortable with their situation, we weren't. Women wanted the opportunity to break free, you know, explore and experiment and, ya, men were comfortable. So...as it was easy for us to change it's not gonna be as easy for them to change 'cause they were fine with their situation, they were...as I said this equality thing is a huge process” [Tshidi, Female]

Tshidi emphasises that women are the ones who underwent inequality and seems to point out that they therefore need to be patient in their expectations regarding gender role transition. This argument appears to point out that African women may not be as comfortable about the overwhelming double role of provider and homemaker but may be working at gender equality strategically, tackling one issue at a time. It appears sensible for African women to enter the job market and enable themselves to negotiate decision-making power in the household through the means of earning an independent income. Gaining a voice through an income may in future allow African women to negotiate gender role division whereas focusing on gender role transition before ascertaining shared headship in the household may bear no positive equality results.

Barriers to cross- adoption of gendered roles

For most of the male participants, gender equality meant a complete transition of roles such that women and men should be willing to equally share in performing each other's traditionally assigned roles. This view was however two-fold with some men arguing in favour of women that men should be more willing to adopt women's roles as much as women have been willing to adopt men's roles. Others argued that women should be as willing to adopt men's roles as much as they expect men to adopt women's traditional roles. Nonetheless it was noted that women are already far in the process of role 'cross-adoption' while men are still quite reluctant to engage in the process. Some of the participants blamed this on men's embrace of cultural practices, which they use to influence each other such that men who may want to engage in the process of role 'cross-adoption' are discouraged and stigmatised by other men. One participant put it this way:

"...A lot of men would embrace the idea of taking care of women or taking care of activities that women are known to take care of. But pressures around society force men to be kind of be steadfast especially in the African men, how if you live among a group of people who believe that a woman's place is in the kitchen and you come and deviate you'll be under persecution until you believe that a woman's place is in the kitchen" [Sthembiso, Male]

The participant's perception that men are unable to escape assimilation into other men's beliefs is quite significant in the above quote. It seems that the punishment amongst men is quite severe considering that men would rather resort to rejection of their personal beliefs. Connell's (1995) hegemonic masculinity seems to account well for this phenomenon. While the 'ideal' masculinity is constructed as an opposite to femininity then the adoption of traditionally women's roles and femininity will continue to be devalued and men who deviate from the traditional masculinity will be devalued along with the feminine roles. It seems this tends to place pressure on men to conform to the hegemonic masculinity, and thereby avoid being seen as less of a man and losing their identity as a man (Connell, 1995; Kometsi, 2004). The hegemonic masculinity ideology seems to be one of the most important ways in which gender inequality is perpetrated. It

appears that as far as hegemonic masculinity is protected and continues to exist, men are likely to strive to distance themselves from feminine roles and emphasise their authority. On the surface, hegemonic masculinity is merely the opposite of femininity that defines manhood and may appear natural considering the anatomical differences. However, below the surface, it appears to carry characteristics of authority and a negative attitude towards feminine attributes (Kometsi, 2004). Therefore, it appears that men continue to hold their power as far as masculinity is clearly defined from femininity, and the hegemonic masculinity is the standard to which men measure themselves and others against (Connell, 1995; Kometsi, 2004). Continuation of the ideal masculinity, through societal pressure and criticism among men, seems to ascertain a power divide amongst women and men.

Hegemonic masculinity or, in radical feminism terms, patriarchy, has been argued to be the greatest obstacle to gender equality (Tong, 1998; Weedon, 1987). It is further important, however, to consider the integration of a hegemonic masculinity and a collectivist culture, which promotes conforming to a larger group over individualism. It therefore seems that African men are confronted by greater pressure with regards to conforming to social standards than their Western counterparts whom, while confronted by the pressure of an ideal masculinity, may still exercise some individuality and choose not to adopt the idealised masculinity. This is not to suggest that Western men are not pressurised to adopt an ideal masculinity, rather African men seem to be confronted by more pressure as the culture, over and above hegemonic masculinity, encourages conformity.

Some male participants also based the slow progression of men's adoption of women's roles on women's unclear expectations from men. They argued that women are not adequately assertive in claiming their rights even while they have the opportunity to do so. It was argued that, with the exception of being co-providers, women continue to unquestioningly follow traditional roles as in the following quotes.

“...it’s more of the girl trying to fit in with the guy...what the guy wants than sort of let’s decide together what we’re gonna do. And it is just that I’m seeing that even with ladies being independent they’re still okay with that whole idea. And...in a strange sort of way actually I think that’s how they’d like things to be actually...” [Tshepo, Male]

“they wanna be called independent and all of that but at the same time they expect you to do the things that you did for them like open the door and be courteous and pay the bill or...you know those things” [Lloyd, Male]

It seems then that the male participants, considering the argument set forth by the female participants, misunderstand African women’s intentions for gender equality. The male participants seem to be of the view that (African) women want a breakdown of gender roles whereas women, according to the female participants, primarily want equal respect and inclusion in decisions.

Male participants further argued that women are ambiguous in their quest for gender equality. Male participants perceived this as a strategy for women to get benefits both from traditional gender role prescriptions and modern gender equality aspirations. In line with this argument, the male participants thought that women benefit from traditional roles in not being responsible for paying bills. Therefore, they concluded, even though women are equally capable of financial responsibilities, largely this is still left to men to take care of. Thus, it seems that the male participants do not perceive a significant sharing of the provider responsibility within couples and that women perceive their income to be for their personal use rather than the whole family. On the other hand, the male participants perceived women to benefit from equality policies in that they can claim their rights in wanting to be equally influential in the relationship. This argument is summarised in the following quote extracted from the interview with Lloyd (L), a male participant:

L: “...Even though they like to have double standards and stuff...women [laugh]”

R: "Double standards?"

L: "Like uh they wanna be called independent and all that but at the same time they expect you to do the things that you did for them like open the door and be courteous and pay the bill or...you know those things"

The quote seems to illustrate a lose-lose situation for men that is brought about by women's perceived abuse of rights and tradition. This may explain men's slow adoption of the homemaker role in that the benefit of gender role transition only benefits women. It seems that men, on the other hand, would be expected to be primary providers as well as share in the homemaker role and relinquish their decision-making power. In this regard, it seems that men's reluctance to adopt roles traditionally associated with women is influenced by the perception that this would not completely result in the equalization of gender roles. Rather it would translate into men being unfairly responsible for multiple roles that, paradoxically, Gupta (1999) and Milkie and Pentola (1999) conceive to be a problem currently faced by women.

Misunderstanding of the other's intentions seems to be the common issue in all the points raised regarding barriers towards gender role 'cross-adoption'. On the one hand, African women and men are aware of gender rights that are advocated by Western feminist movements and African women benefit from these in terms of entering the job market and earning an independent income as they live within a 'gender equality promoting constitution' in South Africa. On the other hand, the promotion of indigenous culture also means that African women may conform to cultural standards of gender relation. It may seem, to African men, that women benefit from traditional as well as modern gender relations whereas it may be an attempt to balance socio-political and socio-cultural demands.

The male participants in this study, however, seem to be of the view that consciousness regarding gender equality means a complete adoption of Western standards of gender relations, assuming that consciousness regarding gender equality means assimilation into Western culture. Thus while the issue of concern may be to clarify African women and

men's understanding of gender equality, a potentially equally important issue is to be alert to the conflict that may be brought about by the presence of opposing values within a society. On the one hand, women seem to be overwhelmed through adoption of multiple roles because socio-political and socio-cultural values promote financial independence and fulfilling the homemaker role, respectively. On the other hand, men perceive women to benefit from modern and traditional role division as they are potentially awarded decision-making power and shared homemaker role through socio-political rights as well as exempt from provider responsibility as dictated by culture.

Considering the two-dimensional model of acculturation, it is expected that the participants, living within a society that promotes multiple cultures, may be confronted by inner conflict of establishing a cultural identity. It seems in doing so, women and men may neglect to realise that the overtly conflicting cultures may require integration rather than assumptions of which culture should be adopted. For instance, it seems that the women in the study are under the impression that lobola as an African practice is worthwhile, and so is the homemaker role as an African practice, however Western ideals of equal decision-making power are also incorporated into the identity of African women. On the other hand, men seem to be of the idea that women need to choose whether they assimilate into Western culture, in which case they would be equally responsible for paying bills for example, or they separate themselves from Western ideals and fully commit to relinquishing household headship and be fully responsible for the homemaker role.

In sum, most female participants perceive gender equality to be based on shared power in making decisions and the focus regarding traditional and modern gender relations concerns whether or not this has been achieved in modern times rather than whether gender roles have blurred. It was perceived that modern women are experiencing gender equality better than women from traditional times have. Gender equality, for socialist feminists, is a quest to breaking down gender roles in order to liberate women from their oppressed roles (Eisenstein, 1979; Ehrenheim, 1997). Irrespective of whether participants supported this socialist feminist view, besides women's 'cross-adoption' of the provider

role, most perceived the socialist feminist strategy to equality largely unsuccessful. Considering the participants' perceived minimal change of gender roles, the differing perceptions about the meaning of gender equality and the theorised basis of lobola on traditional gender roles, it becomes interesting to explore perceptions about the relevance of lobola in the modern era.

The relevance of lobola

This paragraph firstly aims to introduce the reader to the concept of the lobola system, particularly its significance, from the participants' perspectives. This is in order as the discussion refers, from this point, to the participants' perspectives regarding the practice and therefore calls an awareness of the meaning attached to the practice. Secondly, the paragraph aims to orient the reader to the content of the subthemes contained under this theme.

A number of different ideas about the significance of lobola emerged from the participants. These ranged from perceiving lobola as a means for the man to show appreciation to the woman's parents for raising her, to lobola being associated with funding the wedding of the couple and/or to prove that the groom is in a financial position to afford supporting a family. It seems lobola has different meanings for different people although in some instances it had multiple meanings for one individual. The different meanings, however, seem to have a common concept about the articulated role of the man. Here were the main definitions from the participants:

"He comes to pay something just to say thank you for bringing up this woman into the woman that I want to make my wife" [Mapule, Female]

"I believe that lobola was meant as a proof that you can afford to marry a person and take care of her" [Sipho, Male]

“...it (lobola) is what the... guy’s family pays in gratitude...it’s more towards the wedding thing....the woman’s side of the family holds the wedding, does the whole wedding, plans everything...” [Zukiswa, Female]

In all three instances, i.e. appreciation of the woman, funding the wedding and proving financial ability to take care of the woman/ family, the man’s financial ability determines the woman’s family’s approval of the couple’s marital union. The role of the man as a provider seems quite evident in the practice as all financial responsibilities of the process seem to fall onto him rather than shared between him and the woman he is marrying. The subtheme ‘lobola practice in traditional and modern times’ engages with participants’ perspectives on the relevance of lobola in the traditional and modern period, whether conditions within each period support the practice in consideration of the noted gender role transition. The subtheme ‘lobola and the modern provider role’ discusses the participants’ views regarding the provider role shared by women and men and its impact on the lobola practice (or lack thereof).

Lobola practice in traditional and modern times

Most participants agreed that the role of the man was logical considering that when the practice was initiated, men were the ones with capital and were thus in a better position than women to use this capital as lobola. This is captured well in the following statement from one of the female participants:

“I guess back in the days because men were the ones working, I don’t think they would expect women to pay lobola like since the women stayed at home, took care of the kids, and usually, since back then they used to stay at the guy’s home, they’d take care of the whole family and stuff...” [Refiloe, Female]

The quote illustrates that men’s socially prescribed role of being the provider is clearly tied in with the role prescribed through the lobola process, i.e. lobola payment. Considering Refiloe’s reasoning regarding the man’s role within the lobola practice one can conclude that the homemaker role, which has been clearly stated as the opposite to

the provider role, becomes expected from the woman. Some participants mentioned that women assumed the homemaker role in exchange for lobola payment. Considering that the capital given to the woman's family came from the man's family rather than the man alone, it made sense to most of the participants that the woman would have the responsibility of looking after the man's family as well. It thus seems that most participants share Parkin's (1980) view that the division of roles is made more salient through marriage payments. However, unlike Parkin (1980), the participants did not perceive this negatively as far as traditional times were concerned since gender roles were already divided in accordance with 'nature's demands'. The reasoning therefore appears to be that the (traditional) divisions of the roles justified lobola.

Important to note, however, is the underlying meaning of lobola being based on the traditional division of gender roles, specifically the fact that men had capital and women tended to family needs. It would seem then that with the blurred provider role, where women are equally capable of the provider responsibility, the lobola practice will follow in the trend and no longer be uni-directional. Further, as it appears that the homemaker role towards the family and husband was as an exchange of lobola that too, would need to be shared between the couple. It is therefore important to ponder at this juncture whether the lobola practice, clearly stated as based on traditional gender roles, should be sensitive towards, and cognisant of, gender role transition. On the one hand, lobola practice seems to have been dictated to by the then gender role division in society. However, it seems that lobola may further cement gender roles, in line with Parkin's (1980) argument that marriage payments make gender roles more salient.

Most of the female participants noted that the lobola practice may enhance gender role division but did not perceive this to be problematic. This makes sense considering their support for gender role division in the household and that the homemaker role should remain the woman's responsibility. It is noteworthy, however, that the female participants did not evaluate how modern women's sharing in the provider role should translate into a mutual payment from both the man and the woman. It seems that, as some male participants' argued, income-earning women continue to expect men to be the sole or

primary providers and women's adoption of the provider role appears to be for self-benefit rather than for the benefit of the couple or the family. Thus, it may be that women do not question their provider role in lobola payment because they reason that the role is primarily the man's responsibility irrespective of the woman's income. This deduction is supported by the female participants' view that women's self-earned income is, primarily, women's security against maltreatment from their husbands. They argued that financial independence allows women to be able to provide for themselves and avoid entrapment in a marriage for financial reasons. This argument is summarised in this quote:

"...if you have a woman who is financially independent she can pay the husband his lobola money back and leave, you know. I can see how a woman who's not financially independent can have a difficulty in having equal power with her husband" [Tshidi, Female]

The quote illustrates how financial independence may be a significant factor for a woman's power negotiation, especially in a marriage where lobola has been paid for her. Tshidi, along with other participants, is aware that men's sole payment of lobola may give the man power over the woman. However, it seems that the man's awareness of the woman's financial potential is sufficient to ensure a voluntary equal share of power from the husband. The perceived manner in which men can misuse lobola payment within their marriages will be discussed in the following theme. Suffice to mention at this point is that women's independently-earned income appears to have a function in the lobola practice, however it appears to primarily be for their own benefit rather than for the couple's benefit. It seems income-earning allows women to continue within the practice while at the same time avoid the problems that the practice may bring about for them, such as subordination by the husband. It is, however, important to note that income-earning may not necessarily guarantee a power-struggle free marriage between couples, but merely a platform for women to be more assertive in power-sharing. On the other hand, income-earning, while perhaps effective in manifest and latent power struggles, it would seemingly not be as effective in hidden power struggles. Supporting this deduction is the

already witnessed female participant's expression of valuing a tradition that admittedly requires more effort and time from them than their male counterparts.

The apparent contradiction, that is female participants noting an overwhelming responsibility for women and yet support the continuation of the practice, may be better explained by Lukes' (2005) hidden power concept. That is, through ideology, women have become convinced about the need to value and hold on to tradition as a way of expressing cultural identity. This perception seems to have allowed women to downplay, even though cognisant of, the unequal gender roles or responsibilities. Perhaps even more aggravating to this situation is the collectivist nature of the African culture. Therefore while women may find the practice problematic, it seems they have used income-earning as a way to be able to allow the tradition to continue for the good of the cultural group while protecting themselves against its possible negative consequences.

Lobola and the modern provider role

Most of the male participants had problems with regards to the lobola payment being based on men's prescribed provider role. Even though most agreed that these were logical in traditional times, most of the male participants also thought that the practice is no longer relevant as both women and men are providers nowadays. They argued that women are equally able to fund a wedding, support a family as well as show appreciation to each other's parents for having raised their spouse as according to the perceived logic behind lobola. In this regard, it was perceived that the practice had failed to change with time and it has resulted in the practice being unfair to men who pay lobola in the modern era.

Further, they argued that the reasons for men's payment of lobola are no longer plausible in a society where both women and men are generally in similar financial conditions. One male participant suggested that the practice is no longer logical since the man is expected to prove his ability to be a provider whereas this has become a shared responsibility between spouses. Below is what he said regarding this issue:

“Why would a guy in the same financial position as the woman he is intending to marry pay to acquire the woman whereas they are both in the same financial position? Why would he need to prove to the parents that he can afford her whereas she can afford herself?” [Sipho, Male]

Sipho, with his question, clearly aims to highlight the irrationality of continuing the practice, which was meant to be evidence for a man’s financial capacity to afford the woman he marries, in which case the highlighted aim is no longer reasonable in today’s times. Some of the male participants also questioned the unshared payment considering the reasons behind lobola and the reality of women being able to share in the responsibility. Below is an extract from one of the male participants:

“women are able to take care of themselves now so I could beg the question that is it still necessary for us to pay lobola” and “if we had to do the whole equality basis we could actually assume that maybe families should be exchanging the idea of lobola.” [Sthembiso, Male]

These arguments make sense considering that South Africa is a country where gender equality is one of the most promoted policies in the country (CGE, 2005). The uni-directional payment of lobola in a period where women are equally able to provide for themselves and for their families does not seem aligned with gender equality policies and seems to be unfavourable to men. With the lobola practice it seems that the man is still expected to be the provider in terms of what the payment of lobola symbolises from the man to the woman’s family. In light of this, there are numerous gender equality problems towards men that arise with the role of lobola which were raised by the male participants.

The first problem is related to the man being the only one who shows appreciation to the woman’s family. Lobola payment as appreciation, according to some participants, symbolises recognition of the parents’ efforts for instilling respect and good morals. The daughter’s conduct will be a reflection on the parents’ principles, in which case the price to show appreciation will be negotiated accordingly from either side. Factors that play a

role in evaluating a daughter's instilled principles in determining an accurate price will be discussed in a later theme. The question that was raised regarding lobola, as appreciation, was whether men do not deserve to be equally appreciated as women are in this process. This seems to reflect back to the comment that was discussed earlier that women have double standards regarding gender equality. The question seems to be based on the reality of women's attention to gender equality, which seems to be ignored when traditional roles are beneficial to them, as it seems the case with lobola payment as appreciation. According to one male participant, contrary to most of the male participants' opinion, men should be the ones to pay lobola as an indication that they appreciate the woman since men need women more than women need men as supporting life partners. His reason for the traditional practice of lobola remaining the same was as follows:

"Men can't be without women but women can be without men. So because it's a need for a man to have a woman in life so that's why I believe it's the right thing for men to pay lobola. But women can be able to live without men in their lives and even reach fifty years. Because if you look at men, men can lose a wife today and become a widow but very soon the man will get married again because he can't live without a woman. But a woman, if her husband passes away she can stay a widower until the day she dies, after twenty years or twenty five years. That's why I'm saying, it's important for men to have to go and show that we need this and then pay lobola." [Sabelo, Male]

In the above quote, Sabelo's interpretation of appreciation is quite different from the other male participants. It seems to be primarily about being grateful for what the presence of the woman will bring into the man's life rather than her instilled character. In other words the focus is on the woman rather than the woman's parents. There seems to be quite a lot of value placed on the woman, she becomes an esteemed prize in which case the man must show his gratitude. Quite significantly, the woman is perceived to be inherently independent while the man is inherently dependant and lobola payment seems to symbolise a closing of this gap. At a deeper level, at least for Sabelo, the payment of lobola seems to be a trade for women's perceived independence such that the woman is

no longer in a situation to simply break free from the man. This ties in with Goody's (1973) reasoning that lobola payment may disadvantage women as inability to pay the lobola money back will oblige them to tolerate a marriage from which they would rather break away. In modern times, according to the female participants, lobola may prove to be less disadvantageous to women considering that they are likely to have an income and can pay the money back when they want to leave the marriage.

On the other hand, it seems that lobola payment does not bear many advantages for men and the theorised 'lobola payment in lieu of acquiring women's independence' seems to be no longer an advantage to men in modern society. It is in this sense that at first glance Sabelo's insistence on lobola payment to remain unmodified, even though this seems to be to the detriment of men, appears to be strange. However, if acquiring women's independence is a motivation for lobola payment, then the current situation of women's financial independence may be a strengthening factor for lobola payment as women's independence is even more increased. However, it seems lobola payment continues to threaten women's independence. In the face of increasing female independence, financial independence at least, this threat can be observed in the generally increasing lobola price in the modern era, where a woman's career and financial status is taken into account (Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997). This raises a question as to whether the increasing lobola price in the modern era does not put an equal strain on modern women, as with traditional women, with regard to paying back lobola money when the need arises. While traditional women may have been trapped in marriages because their financial dependence meant they could not pay their way out of the marriage, it may be a similar case for modern women who may have their own money and still find that they do not possess enough to pay their way out of the marriage.

The second problem that was raised is that it appears ironic that the man is asked to pay a certain sum of money to prove his financial ability to take care of his intended family. It would seem that by virtue of having paid lobola the man lessens his financial ability to provide for his family as expected. One may then begin to question the extent to which lobola ultimately serves its purpose or whether it compromises the couple's financial

situation to begin and support a household. Some of the male participants pointed out the unfairness of lobola from this perspective as can be seen in the following quote:

“...it does seem unfair a bit again that you pay lobola and again you’re expected to provide for your family...” and “...you have to pay this certain amount and have your pockets empty and still again you have to manje [now] find a house together and so forth it’s going to...it’s more pressure on the guy.” [Menzi, Male]

Menzi, in the above quote, questions the logic of lobola and highlights the paradox contained in the practice in view of the man’s prescribed provider role and the resultant strain that lobola, as evidence of the man’s capacity to fulfil the role, may put on the man’s fulfilment of the role. His questioning seems general to the practice rather than linked to the relevance of the practice in modern times. However, the implication of a man’s compromised ability to fulfil his role may be more significant in modern times where women have the potential to perform the provider role as well. An earlier review of literature illustrated that men’s masculine identity is generally formed and reinforced by men’s difference from women, and that this identity continues to be the idealised masculinity (Connell, 1995, Kometsi, 2004). In light of this, a woman’s fulfilment of the provider role at a point where a man is incapable of doing better, or at least the same, may have a negative effect on the man’s masculine identity. This is a problem considering that men whose masculine identity is threatened tend to instil power, reemphasise their authority, by being abusive (Kometsi, 2004).

Most female participants agreed that gender roles were ingrained in the lobola practice as the male participants argued above; however the female participants were more positive about the practice than the male participants were. Several counter arguments were raised against the unfair cementing of ‘male as provider’ stereotype that the male participants picked out as articulated in the practice. Firstly, it was argued that the payment of money to the woman’s parents as appreciation is not an end in itself; the money is used to fund the wedding and spent buying essential things for the couple’s household. Secondly, the woman’s side of the family was wholly responsible for the arrangement of the wedding,

seeing to the availability of, and organising, all essential things for the wedding. The argument is thus that the money is not for the benefit of the woman's parents or the woman, it is rather for the benefit of the couple; and the woman's family has its own role to play in the lobola practice. A female participant argued as follows on the issue:

“'Cause when my sister got married and stuff, it was not like he was paying my sister ...at the end of the day ...the woman's side of the family holds the wedding, does the whole wedding, plans everything....buying stuff for when they start off”

[Zukiswa, Female]

Here Zukiswa makes the different roles that the woman and man's family perform salient, however, she also equalises the roles even though they are different. The payment is perceived as much a benefit to the couple as is the planning and organising of the wedding. It seems that the role of women being left with the responsibility of organising the wedding is aligned with women's socially prescribed role of being a homemaker. Zukiswa seems to emphasise the point that gender equality, where gender roles are concerned, should not imply that women and men must have identical roles. This argument is similar to the argument made earlier in the previous theme where most of the female participants insisted on gender role differentiation and justified this as different yet fair. However, considering the views discussed above, it seems that the lobola practice is not fair to either gender group. The male participants make this clear as they hold negative views towards it. On the other hand, women are aware that the practice may present problems such as abuse from husbands towards their wives, highlighting that it may present, or aggravate, power struggles between a couple. While female participants mention that independently earning an income acts as protection against some of the problems that may be encountered in lobola marriages, it seems clear from the male participants' analysis that the amount of money paid for lobola is not easily affordable. This possibly puts modern women in the same dangers as traditional women, that is, being unable to pay the lobola money back if the need arises.

It appears that the lobola practice has not changed to accommodate modern times where there exists a socio-political encouragement of individuality regardless of gender. This discussion has established that the expectations brought about by the lobola practice comply with, and perhaps even encourage, the socially prescribed gender roles of woman as ‘homemaker’ and man as ‘provider’. As in the previous theme, the female participants generally perceived no problems with the articulated roles within the lobola practice. Male participants, on the other hand, had reservations regarding the division of roles in the lobola practice. The female and male participants, in the theme ‘traditional and modern conceptions of gender equality’, expressed differing views concerning gender role division; the female participants were in favour of gender role division while male participants were against it. Considering these standpoints on gender role division, the participants’ viewpoints regarding the division of roles under the lobola practice is not surprising as the standpoints appear to be aligned. The following theme considers the impact of lobola on negotiation of power between partners in light of the compliance of the lobola practice with traditional gender relations.

The impact of lobola

Most of the participants, both male and female, expressed a concern that men may use lobola as a justification to abuse their wives. The man might insist upon the woman fulfilling the homemaker role when he has paid lobola for her. Men’s payment of lobola may also lead them to believe that they are entitled to and deserving of the woman’s service because the exchange may be misinterpreted as a monetary transaction as explained by the participant in the extract below:

“...because as far as we know, when you have...the idea behind money you exchange money to receive something that will be your possession. So in all essences when you give off money if it’s not for charity you are buying something out of it”[Sthembiso, Male]

In this instance, lobola payment may be perceived as a trade for the woman to serve the man, echoing Parkin's (1980) argument that marriage payment awards men claim for certain rights from the woman, which include domestic, sexual and childbirth rights. Constant reference was made to men's misconception or, according to others, deliberate misinterpretation of lobola as buying the woman from her parents and hence the men's expectation of the woman to be at the mercy of her husband. The following quote illustrates this point.

"...I have too much money, for instance, and I'm able to pay lobola of a high price to a woman and that woman maybe doesn't have anything then I stand a bigger chance to, when we fight, to say I bought you from your parents by this much and wara wara wara. And that will degrade the woman because she will feel that she was paid that money to acquire her or something and she wouldn't feel that self-strength to fight against abuse or any other type of situation she might be in because her parents maybe couldn't afford to pay back or something." [Sipho, Male]

In the extract above, Sipho illustrates the compromised position of a woman for whom lobola has been paid; it seems that the man is advantaged such that the payment of lobola becomes an all-encompassing reason for a woman to be submissive towards her husband. In Lukes' (2005) three-dimensional model of power, as discussed in a previous section, this manner of a man's win of conflict would be labelled 'overt' power, where the man makes vocal claims of power over the woman. It was also mentioned that lobola paying men may also benefit from what Lukes (2005) refers to as 'latent' power, where the woman accepts her assigned position for fear that this will trigger conflict. Both male and female participants perceived this display of power negatively. Men's benefit from either overt or latent power as a result of lobola payment qualified as abuse of the lobola system.

The female participants, however, did not perceive lobola as rendering modern women helpless even with the potential of abuse they and the male participants highlighted. As

already discussed in the previous theme, modern women were perceived to be privileged compared to traditional women in that they could pursue careers, earn their own income, claim their equal share of power and/or walk away from an abusive marriage. Therefore, lobola was considered less potentially detrimental to women of the modern age compared to traditional women. Blumberg (1991) argued similarly in asserting that women who earn a similar income as their husbands were better able to negotiate fertility decisions as the higher a woman's economic power, the higher her relative power to her partner tended to be. Thus, it seems that the underlying meaning of lobola payment as an exchange for sexual and childbirth rights from the woman, as according to Parkin (1980), is compromised in a marriage where the woman has economic power. In light of the female participants' primary concern regarding gender equality being equal headship or decision-making power (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1991), the potential of lobola to compromise gender equality is perceived to be minimised in the modern era.

Sipho however refers to the high price of lobola that a man may pay and a woman's family being unable to pay it back. The female participants argue from the perspective that a woman would pay the money back from her own income, however as previously argued, the higher price of lobola in modern times may compromise this possibility. It would seem that a woman's decision to walk away from a marriage continues to depend on her parents paying back the lobola money thus lessening any difference between women from traditional and modern times. The disadvantages suffered by traditional women would then apply similarly to women of modern times. The prominent disadvantage mentioned by Goody (1973) is that women must endure an unhappy or even abusive marriage because the parents are unable or, in many cases, as Sipho argued, unwilling to pay the lobola money back. This is what Sipho expressed regarding the issue of encouragement of abuse endurance to avoid lobola back-payment:

“...What happens is the parents of the woman make sure that the woman stays in abuse. So they sort of um, there's an old saying which says 'vhuhadzi ndi thole ya fhufhuma ri a fhunzhela', which means when you...once a woman is married, it's a difficult situation and we know that, when troubles arise we must sit down and

talk about them. And in a cultural way, divorces are not meant to happen, people aren't suppose to divorce, even in the worst abuse a woman can go through, you're still not supposed to divorce. And those who are married in a cultural sense, those who practice it thoroughly they know not to divorce so they stay in abuse in essence, a man will beat them up and they will stay. They will run back home and then they will go back..." [Sipho, Male]

Highlighted in the above quote is that culture may be misused by people to counter certain things that may be disadvantageous to them, such as the back payment of lobola by parents of an unhappily married woman. Sipho perceives this unwillingness to pay lobola money back as veiled in the cultural principle that opposes divorce. This principle highly contrasts with the socio-political privilege that encourages personal choice as to whether one wants to stay within or leave a marriage (Albertyn, 2004). Lukes' (2005) idea of hidden power is evident here, in that the African cultural principle of forbidden divorce after a marriage seems to present an attractive idea of sustained commitment among married couples. Upholding this principle may present individuals as moral and may prove a worthwhile social virtue to be promoted and preserved. On a deeper level, however, it may present entrapment for the couple involved, more so the wife, while it benefits distant others that are involved. Specifically where lobola is concerned, the principle of no divorce seems to ensure that parents of the bride keep the capital given to them by the groom. Therefore there seems to be a hidden power struggle between generations, which may also affect generations across, potentially causing major challenges as these prescriptions are not likely to be questioned but most likely to be continued as part of tradition.

Further, since the lobola practice is male-controlled, there appears to be a power struggle between women and men. Defining the homemaker and provider roles according to sex may create an impression of lobola having no impact on gender role division but rather that it follows pre-defined cultural prescriptions. However, at careful inspection the lobola practice evidently plays a role in re-emphasizing gender role division in that the man as provider pays the lobola and the woman as homemaker is expected to provide care for

her family as well as bear children. In a time of gender rights promotion, lobola may act as a mechanism to buffer efforts of changing tradition. A woman for whom lobola has been paid may not feel as deserving of being liberated from the homemaker role and bearing children since this is the very exchange for the lobola paid (Parkin, 1980). Therefore, where lobola succeeds in cementing potentially harmful cultural prescriptions, women's power positions may be compromised.

Even though most of the female participants expressed an unquestionable responsibility towards the homemaker role, most considered a man's communicated expectation of the woman's role, such as demanding food, washed laundry, care for children etc., to be abusive. The participants considered abusive men's expectations of the woman's performance of the homemaker role unrealistically high or deliberately critical and usually clearly based on the payment of lobola. They perceived this attitude to be a result of resentment from men's payment of lobola and most likely to happen in modern times than in traditional times. Again, they linked this resentment to modern men's misunderstanding and/or misconception of the aim of the lobola practice. The following quote sums up the participants' perceptions of men's misconception of the lobola payment and the effect this may have on the marital relationship:

"Well, in most cases men tend to think that when you pay that lobola it's more of you're buying someone and so if ...if you don't live up to their expectations you will hear them say 'what did I pay all this money for, for this nonsense?' and things like that. But I don't believe hore [that] lobola was meant for that, to say you're buying someone and you're buying them as a slave mara [but] most men use that thing in that way ya hore [that] she's your slave now, you bought her and she has to cook for you, wash for you and do whatever and whatever. If she doesn't then you have the right to claim your money back, you know, things like that." [Palesa, Female]

This extract creates the impression that the performance of the homemaker role should be a voluntary rather than a forced action. Demand of the role performance signifies

disrespect for the woman's efforts. The question of interest then is whether the performance of a prescribed gendered social role such as that of a homemaker, which is further emphasised by a practice such as lobola, can truly be voluntarily performed. From Lukes (2005) perspective, women's unquestioning acceptance of their prescribed role is an expression of men's 'hidden' power. The above quote reiterates Luke's (2005) argument that 'overt' claims of power, such as men's demanding of women's service are easily identifiable by the oppressed group and are, therefore, open to being challenged. It is rather hidden power that is of more concern, since the power struggle in such situations takes the façade of being beneficial to all concerned (Lukes, 2005). Evidently, most female participants argued that it is their duty to perform the homemaker role even in a time where the provider role is no longer reserved for men. Evidently, overt power is identifiable and challenged while hidden power is accepted as the norm.

Lukes' (2005) manifest view of power refutes the female participants' general view that roles continue to be different yet equal even in the modern era where women have shared the burden of the provider role and yet continue to be solely responsible for the homemaker role. Important to point out is that both male and female participants perceived modern women's income as primarily for their own use rather than the couple and family, which left the responsibility of providing for the family with the man. This appears to challenge the idea that men benefit from hidden power as it gives the impression that women's struggle to balance their multiple roles is primarily for their own benefit rather than the couple. Under scrutiny, however, this does not appear to be the case since the very reason that women are prepared to earn an independent income, thereby adding on responsibility on themselves, is the need to negotiate power with men as argued by some female participants. If traditional roles were balanced, then men would not be in a more powerful position and women would not struggle for gender equality to the point of wanting to take on men's roles in a quest for equality leading to men's further benefit from lessened responsibility.

There was agreement from male and female participants that men may potentially abuse lobola payment. They asserted that men's 'overt' and 'latent' claim for power, i.e. where

men may verbally demand power or women hand over power for fear of conflict, reflected men's abuse of the lobola practice for their benefit. The third claim for power that men utilised, 'hidden power', where men had less responsibilities than women was not considered a power struggle. It seems that cultural prescriptions of roles continue to be prevalent even within a socio-political era where an individual identity is encouraged over, and perceived to be separate from, a gender identity. Modern men's resentment of lobola paying and high prices of lobola were raised in this theme as having an effect on the oft-observed power struggles within couples. The following theme continues in this trend to establish the reasons behind increased lobola prices in the modern period and men's resentment thereof.

The commoditisation of women

Both female and male participants pointed out that certain factors played a role in determining the price for a bride. The factors that they perceived to influence a bride's price were the bride's level of education, whether she already has a child at the period of negotiations and, if she does have a child, whether the child's father is the groom or another man. In determining a suitable price to be paid for the bride, the bride's and groom's family work from opposing angles. The bride's family aims to maximise the worth of their daughter to get as high a payment as possible. The groom's family, on the other hand, aims to minimise the worth of the bride in order to pay as little as possible. In light of this, the bride's family will bring across all the positive aspects about their daughter when naming the price while the groom's family will highlight all the negative aspects about the bride and argue for a reduced price. The families' agreement over a bride's price is a result of negotiation regarding the positive and negative aspects of the bride which are said to increase or decrease the bride's value as highlighted in the following quotes:

"...So most families would look at your standard of your education and base the whole process ya [of] lobola on that hore [that] okay, the amount of money should be more because my child is educated, we took her to university and things

like that, wena[you] you can't come ware o tlomonyala ka [and say you will marry her with] the standard money ya[of] lobola, maybe bo ma[at about] five thousand, our child is too educated. And also the fact ya hore [that] it's not a woman with a child, it's someone who is still, well in their eyes, pure because ha na ngwana [she does not have a child]. So it has to be a lot of money. I mean it's something e leng hore [that is], it's really observable, if you have ...if you're marrying someone with a child they tell you hore[that] er the husband-to-be's family will tell you hore [that] you can't charge us money e leng hore [that is] is more than ten thousand because we know hore [that]she has a child already and it's not a child of ours, you know." [Palesa, Female]

"if the couple has a child or if the woman has a child and the child is not...does not belong to that the guy it's a different story 'cause now the guy will pay less if the woman has a child. Ya, and if the woman doesn't have a child, if the woman is a virgin, it's totally different. And now, I think, they even consider education like it depends on how educated the woman is, stuff like that, ya. Parents tend to...to ask for more money if like she's educated, she does not have a child and stuff, ya they take that into consideration and if let's say she's got two children and the guy is just, ya, then, it's gonna be very less." [Refiloe, Female]

"They will look at whether the woman is still a virgin, they will look at whether she has kids, they will look at if the children she has are children of the man who is marrying her or they are children of another man, and they will look at whether the woman is educated and how educated she is..." [Sabelo, Male]

The participants quoted above clearly point out how the value of a bride may be based on her level of education and being childless. Their argument, similar to other participants', is that the higher the level of education the higher the bride's value. In this sense, the bride's family will argue for a higher value for their daughter based on the resources spent on her which in the end are said to benefit the groom's family.

Thus in negotiations a high level of education will be used as a justification for a high lobola price by the bride's family. Other participants argued that the groom's family could contest the education based high price by arguing against the education's worth. In other words, whether the high level of education means that the woman will put this to use in supporting the family. In the case that the groom is at a much higher level of education or he stands to make a lot more money than the bride, even if the level of education is lower, the groom's family could point out that the woman's level of education will not be of much use to their family. Thus pointing out that the resources spent on the bride by her family are not lost to the groom's family decreases the worth of the bride.

In a collectivist culture, where a development of one individual is for the greater good of the community or, at least, family (Mkhize, 2004), it seems plausible that a family would perceive a loss if their income-earning daughter leaves the family to join another. In this view the daughter becomes a benefit to the family she joins and it thus makes sense that the 'gaining' family would need to compensate the 'losing' family. It has been argued that in the past, a woman that had been paid lobola for was a gain for the groom's whole family in the sense that the woman would stay with the groom's family, highlighting the collectivist nature of lobola practice in those times. This practice has changed in modern times, with couples now living on their own with their children, it seems that there has been a shift towards an individualist lifestyle (Mkhize, 2004). In light of this, the perceived benefit of the groom's family at the loss of the bride's family is no longer plausible since the bride's income is for the benefit of her immediate family.

A further point that the participants make is that being childless at the period of negotiations increases the value of the bride and thus works in favour of the bride's family. Having a child, on the other hand, works in favour of the groom's family as it decreases the value of the bride. They further mention that if the child belongs to the groom he will be penalised for impregnating her before marrying her, which then means the bride's value is increased. Some participants justified the reduced price of a mother bride, where the child is from another man, as the bride having deprived the man of her

virginity and potentially adds financial responsibility on the man for the child's maintenance.

One of the participants highlights that negotiation is based on *observable* things, viz. level of education and whether there is a child or not, points out that lobola has become focused on a woman's value rather than her character. In this sense, lobola practice seems to mirror the capitalist system. The woman to be married seems to become a product priced according to the loss it leaves the seller and the gain it becomes to the buyer and consumer and thus the seller is reimbursed accordingly. In explaining negotiations, a participant who had a similar reasoning about the judged worth of a woman is quoted below.

"... I don't want to compare women with something that you buy at the shop, but if you're going to a shop and buy something you always look for something that is a quality, so you...by looking at the quality you look at which one is the better one. And then you'll be willing to pay more for something that you know is a quality and you won't be willing to pay more for something that you look at it and not value it as quality." [Sabelo, Male]

Even though Sabelo is overtly reluctant to make the comparison between women and a product, the comparison is made nonetheless. The reasoning that women have become commodities is strengthened by the quote since the comparison is nonetheless chosen as a better enlightening explanation. Also made clear is the high cost of quality that translates into women's value to be judged by the amount of lobola paid for them. This may impact on a woman's self-esteem given that the amount of lobola paid for a woman may become part of her identity and she may experience herself as worthless if the lobola paid for her was low in value. Many participants pointed out that women have become complicit in their own commoditisation. The participants said that women place value in the amount of money that is paid for them as this has become competition amongst each other; the amount of money paid for a woman determines whether the woman becomes respected or mocked by her peers as contained in the following example:

“Now it’s about, in terms of ka siding ya basadi [the women’s side], it’s about how much did they pay for you lobola, so if it was three thousand they’ll be like [giggle] ba mopateditshe three thousand [they have paid three thousand for her] (laugh) so ke [so it is] competition, everybody wants to be bought ka [with], you know, lobola ya haye e be[her lobola to be] like the most expensive like bo ma[about] twenty five thousand so you can go boasting hore[that], you know, ‘eya, ba mpateditshe twenty five thousand’ [yes, they have paid twenty five thousand for me] (laugh).” [Palesa, Female]

Considering the seemingly harsh consequences suffered by women for whom inexpensive lobola is paid, it is unsurprising that brides make no effort to intervene when lobola prices are set higher than their grooms can afford. The concept of alienation manifests in this situation, that the lobola system presents rivalry among women and in the process cause inability for them to recognise the true source of the power struggle. While grooms expect their brides to intervene on their behalf since the brides know their grooms’ financial situation as some male participants believed, the female participants supposed that the brides become silenced, albeit voluntarily, in the lobola process in order not to be victimised later by their peers. Once again, the dynamic of hidden power is evident here where women are seemingly commoditised, however their compliance with this phenomenon saves women from embarrassment thereby presenting a false sense of benefit to them. The reality, it seems, is that the bride’s parents are the benefiter and potentially women subject themselves to a vulnerable situation of not being able to pay back the high-priced lobola if the need arises as discussed in an earlier section. Women’s compliance with high-priced lobola was considered a problem by many participants; it was argued that the conflict between the groom’s expectation for the bride to intervene in high priced lobola and the bride’s wish for an expensive lobola lead to men’s resentment of lobola paying. This, said most of the participants, is because the factors that are taken into account when lobola is negotiated have become abused by brides’ families.

The consideration of observable factors in lobola negotiations have apparently become capitalised by certain families. From a Marxist perspective, this is not surprising considering that these factors arguably make commodities of women. If women are treated as commodities to be sold, then they must bear profit as any commodity in a capitalist market. Keeping in mind that, according to Marxism, the basic capitalist principle is to maximise profit and that bourgeoisies resort to exploitation to meet their profit demands (Hayes, 2004), one can imagine how women's judged worth can be exploited by her family in order to make a profit. Some participants were disturbed by this resultant exploitation of lobola by certain families as the extracts suggest below:

"...basically, it (lobola practice) can be exploited, it can be. People can make it into a money scheme or whatever." [Zukiswa, Female]

"I think the difference now is that now it's sort of a money-making scheme" [Menzi, Male]

"the woman's families are...most often the uncles are the ones misusing the idea behind lobola, they see it as an asset bearing good, this becomes like an exchange of goods because they ask for ridiculous amounts" [Sthembiso, Male]

In the quotes above, the participants refer to lobola being turned into a profit-making transaction in the modern era, contrary to its significance in the past as discussed in the first theme. This points to negotiation of higher prices being unconvincingly justified by the factors that are perceived to increase a woman's worth. Most of the male participants were not entirely against these factors being taken into account in determining a lobola price but some stressed that their economic status should be taken into account such as in the extracts below:

"...if ever I had to pay ilobolo, whatever reasons they give, so long as I can afford it I'd actually pay" [Menzi, Male]

“they shouldn’t be unreasonable about it, you know, they shouldn’t be unreasonable and they should take into account your economic state, so to speak”

[Lloyd, Male]

From these voiced concerns, it is clear that there is a perception that even with these factors being ‘justly’ taken into account, their worth may be exaggerated by the bride’s family. Furthermore, the bride’s family seems to have more power at the negotiations, indicated by one participants’ revelation, in the extract below, that the groom’s family may be turned away with their request for the groom to marry the bride.

“In extreme cases where they don’t agree it would just mean that uh there’s a possibility that you won’t get married unless people just elope, I suppose”

[Sthembiso, Male].

It seems inevitable that the groom, in the end, will pay the price asked of him when the bride’s family no longer wants to negotiate. Other participants also noted that grooms pay the high prices asked of them even if they are not convinced of the worth of the bride being of that value. This resentful paying of high lobola prices was associated with men’s unrealistic expectations and excessive criticism towards their wives. The quote below illustrates that men tend to translate lobola into a nonnegotiable homemaker role for women:

“...if I, as a man, I paid lobola for my wife and then next thing I go to my friend and I say, ‘you know, that woman always come back home tired and I always have to do the cooking’, then my friend will tell me, ‘man, you have paid lobola so you need to tell that woman that you have paid lobola for her, then you need to make that woman, you know do the work because you have paid for her’ and that will be one thing that I will go home and do, you know, force the woman to work, even end up maybe forcing her to leave the work because she has to do her role at home.” [Sabelo, Male]

The above extract highlights the homemaker role as the primary role of women married within the lobola system. It seems clear that interferences with performance of this role are discouraged and possibly eliminated, against the woman's will. This highlights the controlling power that lobola may hand over to men, in order for them to feel the benefit of their spent capital, at the disadvantage of women.

Given the preceding discussion, it appears that in the modern era, women have been made into profit-making commodities that are over-priced to bear maximum profit. The 'buyers' are aware of being victims of exploitation and pass this on to their wives such that a union that is supposed to be centred on love becomes centred on getting the value that the husband has paid for in his 'product' wife. Female participants could not comprehend the reason that men would perceive lobola as exploitation and nonetheless pay it whereas it is no longer compulsory in the modern era. The male participants' reasons for men's compliance with the practice, even with its apparent exploitation of men's capital, pointed to an appeal of culture that preserved the practice and the discussion thus proceeds to this theme.

The appeal of culture

This paragraph briefly gives an orientation of the subthemes discussed under this theme. Many opinions emerged regarding the issues that have been discussed, namely lobola, gender equality and power, and their relation thereof to the participant's value of culture. At times there were conflicts between the beliefs of individuals and cultural prescriptions, as these were made salient by contradictions in some participants' perceptions regarding particular issues. These contradictions are discussed in the subtheme 'lobola and cultural adherence' where opinions about lobola suggest a disapproval of the practice and yet there is a compulsion to follow the tradition. Secondly, there were perceptions that African culture is resistant to change, as required by gender equality policies, and its resistance was associated with the lobola practice. This is discussed in detail under the subtheme 'lobola, gender equality and cultural change'. Lastly, issues regarding relevance and modification to lobola in order to accommodate modern times and better

facilitate change towards gender equality have been and will be challenged in this section. The last subtheme considers whether this kind of change signifies a cultural change or a loss of culture to participants.

Lobola and cultural adherence

Some female participants pointed out that paying lobola was no longer compulsory and has rather become more of a personal choice. Given this perception, they felt it was unfounded for men to agree to pay it and yet be resentful that the payment is one-sided. Here are some of the comments made by female participants regarding this issue:

“I think it depends on, first of all, why the paying, if people decide to do the lobola thing why are they doing it... If they’re just doing it because mommy and daddy says so then, ya, then it’s (lobola) gonna play a role (in gender inequality)...” [Mpho, Female]

“I mean it’s a cultural thing that’s being done, it’s not gonna kill me if it’s not done” and “when it comes to the whole lobola thing, I guess it depends on the people too, whether they want to stay with the cultural thing or not...If you can review why it was done and all of that then you can really understand why the lobola was there” [Zukiswa, Female]

“it’s not compulsory anymore and so if the man feels that it’s unfair that he has to pay for her, he doesn’t have to... so by him paying it means that, you know, he doesn’t see a problem with following the tradition... I think it’s as much a choice as it is culture...” [Tshidi, Female]

The above extracts emphasise a need for men to understand the reasoning behind lobola to allow them to make an informed choice of whether or not to follow the tradition. The highlight here is that while lobola is a tradition and is highly regarded by these participants, they do feel that it need not be followed blindly, if followed at all, in modern times. What is significant in these quotes, however, is that while the female participants

seem to be illustrating the man's personal choice to either pay or not pay lobola, two of them refer to 'people', in other words the couple, making the decision whether or not to follow the tradition. It, then, appears that the stressed personal choice that men have is not as personal as it is made out to be. The reference to more than one person points out that the decision does not lie with one person or, specifically, the man alone. The other person(s), presumably the bride, may have differing opinions about lobola payment such that the man may still be left with the choice of paying or being resented by his wife. This is probable considering that the female participants had quite different, favourable opinions regarding lobola than the male participants as well as the point made earlier that women are competing for a high lobola price with each other. More significantly, considering the values of a collectivist culture, where the majority opinion is valued over that of the individual, it is questionable whether it is as simple for a groom to disregard lobola payment. It seems here that where culture and an individual's opinion are in conflict, culture will prevail. Meaning that while culture seemingly awards men power, which in this context could have meant men being able to disregard lobola payment, culture may as simply withdraw that power when the man practices outside the borders of the particular culture.

While most of the female participants felt that men could exercise personal choice in the matter of lobola payment, most of the male participants did not seem to share this view. Most of the male participants, even having commented on the one-sided payment as not fair on them for whatever reasons, were of the opinion that whether or not they pay lobola would depend on whether their bride's family wants the lobola or not. Regardless of their opinion of the lobola practice, they felt that if the bride's family expected lobola from them then they would not protest against it.

Most of the male participants, who were against lobola paying, had significant, negative factors to point out in terms of how the practice does not change to accommodate modern times and has a negative impact on gender equality. When asked if they would pay, these participants contradicted their argument against lobola and agreed that they would. In the

following quotes, the participants articulate their doubts on the relevance of lobola and yet later they state that they would pay lobola if asked of them.

“I believe it (lobola) should just stop” and “I would pay (lobola)” [Sipho, Male]

“...I don’t wanna say leave this whole thing ye (of) culture” and “I think if it means that much to them...then I wouldn’t have a problem paying lobola” [Menzi, Male]

“it’s sort of really unfair not to acknowledge the parents who raised the guy as well” and “one thing that is obvious is that um if the other family wants lobola then I should pay it as culture would go” [Lloyd, Male]

“...if we had to go with the whole equality basis we could actually assume that maybe families should be exchanging the idea of lobola. But then again it’s going to be culturally flawed, I’d probably be persecuted for making such.” and “No, it’s (the decision to pay lobola) not necessarily on me. I’m indifferent with the idea” [Sthembiso, Male]

From their challenging argument regarding the practice’s relevance, it does not seem that the participants feel that they have a personal choice in the matter of lobola payment. When made aware of the glaring contradiction in their argument, the participants suggest that irrespective of one’s opinion about the lobola practice, it is embedded in culture and forms part of one’s identity as an ‘African’. It was thus reasoned that individuals could not write it off no matter how they felt about it, it was considered beyond the scope of an individual to decide against culture, especially in the midst of others who practice it. It appeared that the male participants were able to reason against the practice individually; however in a situation where others question their cultural adherence, they would rather conform to culture regardless of their personal views on this requirement.

This seemingly superficial cultural adherence seems to point to the collectivist nature of one’s identity within a collectivist culture. As discussed in an earlier section of this

report, individuals from a collectivist culture tend to abandon individual goals in preference of group goals, prefer to avoid conflict rather than deal with it directly, and like to portray a face saving image for the benefit of the group (Mkhize, 2004; Quek & Knudson-Martin, 2006). From this perspective, it is then plausible that the male participants may adhere to a cultural practice that they do not approve of for the sake of culture preservation. It seems that while they may vent about the unfairness of a cultural practice, they would not reject the practice in order to avoid conflict. The felt inability to challenge culture may have implications for couples married under the lobola system. Not addressing personal issues for the sake of conserving culture may translate into men feeling pressured to accept the lobola practice as part of their cultural identity and yet be resentful because it is against their will and better judgement. It may be significant to note that men are awarded authority in most cultures (Tichenor, 2005) and yet the male participants voice a feeling of powerlessness in determining whether to continue a practice that they find no longer worthwhile. In fact it may even seem as though roles are reversed since women, usually disadvantaged by culture (Lukes, 2005), seem to be favoured by the lobola practice. Once again, it is important to ponder the result of this suggested powerlessness of men on masculinity, and the consequences thereof. It appears that men's loss of power through the involuntary adherence to the lobola practice may be forcefully regained by grooms demanding, and being over-critical over, women's performance of the homemaker role, as already discussed in the theme 'impact of lobola'.

Lobola, cultural change and gender equality

Many of the participants felt that gender equality was slowest within the 'African' culture. While some were cognisant that gender equality has been lacking in almost all cultures in the past and that women have been at the receiving end of the inequality, most participants highlighted that many cultures have been able to move past the inequality. Some suggested that the 'African' culture was less able to move away from the inequality because of the lobola practice that reinforces these inequalities.

"it's mainly within African cultures 'cause we took the longest to change...to embrace the change. I mean, when you look at it even Western cultures had the

same ideal about men being superior but over time they changed quicker than we did” and “unfortunately... after lobola is paid there are some stereotypes, guys who believe that a woman should be submissive...” [Sthembiso, Male]

“it (African culture) might be a bit more sexist to other people and I think for us (Africans) it’s because we’ve got so many cultural things where it’s been...where people think it’s set and stone type thing... there’s lobola and there’s all these things” [Mpho, Female]

The way in which lobola can impact on gender equality has been discussed extensively in a preceding theme. Suffice to mention here is the identified relationship between the lobola practice and gender inequality. Other participants who did not perceive the lobola practice as reinforcing inequalities were also cognisant that the practice highlighted traditional gender role differences. In some texts, these differences have been argued to be unequal by virtue of their division (Tichenor, 2005; Zuo, 1997), thus contributing to gender inequality (Burn, 1996). The continued practice of lobola was thus, directly or indirectly, attributed by most of the participants as a contributing factor to gender inequality.

Most participants argued that gender role division is based on biological differences; some however highlighted that socialisation may play a bigger role in gender role division than biological attributes. This reasoning was to point out that cultural practices influenced gender role division more than anatomy, thus where there is gender inequality this is more attributable to culture than biology. An example of this view is contained below:

“Um...I can only speak for my culture, that’s how it’s done in my culture. And I suppose um at that being born with it also has something to do like um, who you grew up with and what they did also plays a big part in it. So I don’t know how... what they do in other cultures, where you’re born with it and whether that seed,

how do I say, gets watered to be that [...] it depends on what your cultural beliefs are.” [Tshepo, Male]

Above, Tshepo refers to the element of being born with the suitability to perform a certain role and that this is not an all-encompassing factor in the potential to do the role. There seems to be a latent comparison of influence between culture and biology and, in view of cultural difference in role performance, the influence of culture is esteemed over biology. Significant, though, is that culture may either maintain the biological nature of the individual or refute it. Most participants seemed to be of the opinion that African cultural prescriptions maintain the biological nature of individuals in its role prescription. Thus, the culturally embedded lobola practice is within this premise.

Some of the male participants, who openly criticised lobola as awarding differential power to women and thereby maintaining gender inequality, suggested a transformation of the practice. The desired transformation of the practice focused on the continued expectation of the man to pay lobola whereas both women and men have become providers in the modern era. As already discussed in previous themes, most of the male participants felt that the potential consequential inequalities that are experienced by women for whom lobola has been paid might be curbed if the lobola practice does not pose unfairness towards men. This is based on the view that men who pay lobola proceed into marriage with resentment for being unfairly treated within the lobola practice. Some male participants thus suggested that lobola needs to be equally paid from both sides of the families, as no matter what the money is resultantly used for, it is equally applicable to both the man and the woman.

“if we had to go with the whole equality basis we could actually assume that maybe families should be exchanging the idea of lobola.” [Sthembiso, Male]

“it’s something that has to change, I think. Ya, it’s, it’s, it’s sort of really unfair not to acknowledge the parents who raised the guy as well” [Lloyd, Male]

Other male participants suggested that the practice should be given up altogether and accept that its time has passed such as in the following extracts:

“I believe it (lobola) should just stop” [Sipho, Male]

“I don’t wanna say leave this whole thing ye (of) culture” [Menzi, Male]

A further similar point was that in the modern era, if it remains important to prove one’s capability to afford a family, it should be adequate that one earns an income. It should be noted however that even having made this suggestion, it was either made reluctantly as in Menzi’s case or followed by a justification of following culture irrespective of personal opinions as Sipho continues after his statement:

“...I’m not a fan or uh follow this practice but some things they are just meant...people today just don’t have control because the people have been doing them for so long”

From the above quote, it seems clear that there is a tendency for traditions to be followed whether or not they are deemed favourable. This should be concerning considering the effort towards breaking down gender inequalities. On the one hand there are women that are satisfied with the practice yet the practice seems to work against their favour. While on the other hand there are men for whom the practice seems, on the surface, to work in their favour however this is not the case according to them. Then there is seemingly an older generation whom have some sort of control over changing the tradition however it is seemingly most beneficial to them. Therefore, there appears to be dynamics here that make it difficult to introduce a gender equality policy to the practice. The group that seemingly needs protecting is not aware of the need, the group that recognises the need is not willing to break down the practice and the group that is perceived to have the means to break down the practice has a vested interest in it.

Cultural change or cultural divorce

In light of the above subtheme, ‘lobola, cultural change and gender equality’, it becomes questionable whether efforts toward gender equality require a cultural change or a cultural divorce. It is significant whether individuals perceive required change that aids gender equality to be implying divorce from their indigenous culture. Considering Berry et al.’s (2004) argument, people who value their culture will not respond positively to changes that appear to threaten the preservation of their culture. Similarly, Ehrehein (1997) points out that an antipatriarchal feminism may not be favourable to groups that are still engrossed to preindustrial patriarchal values. If gender equality is perceived to impact negatively on lobola as a cultural practice, then one may anticipate that gender equality will receive little attention from people who value lobola.

This seems to be the case with most of the female participants. The value placed on lobola and cultural prescriptions seems to undermine the efforts regarding gender equality in terms of the balance of provider versus homemaker roles. As already discussed, female participants expressed a need to hold on to cultural prescriptions of gender roles even though women have adopted the provider role. Here follows an example of a sentiment in favour of the cultural prescription of being a homemaker even in a socio-political period where individuality over gender identity is emphasised:

“I know my duties as a wife...in my culture you are expected to do certain things to look after your husband” [Palesa, Female]

While this may appear a detrimental conviction in light of feminism’s struggle for gender equality, it may be an effort for this woman, and the others that had similar arguments, to hold on to her culture. This is in consideration with most of the participants’ belief that the idea of breaking down gender roles is Western culture laden and thus foreign, in view of Aina’s (1998) contrast between African and Western culture thus giving the idea that these are opposites. If this is the view held by the female participants, then gender equality may be seen as a threat to their cultural identity if it appeals for a change in cultural practice as understood by the male participants. In this sense, a change in the

lobola practice may not be perceived as a necessary change in culture, rather it may be assumed to be an imposed cultural divorce. South Africa is a country where democracy is celebrated for its encouragement for people to celebrate their cultural heritage (Agatucci, 2006). Policies that appear to undermine this privilege may, thus, be received with scepticism.

It seems that the apparent self-contradiction of male participants in terms of the continuation of the lobola practice points to a superficial cultural adherence. The unwillingness to challenge African culture potentially impacts on the perceived essential change regarding the lobola practice; i.e. preventing African culture oriented individuals to better accept the transformation towards gender equality. The choice to conform rather than challenge culture possibly means that African culture and its practices will continue to be overtly unchallenged even when people perceive it necessary, this is evidenced through the male participants' reluctance to challenge culture even though they felt it detrimentally impeded gender equality. On the other hand, strong cultural adherence may impede gender equality where gender equality is perceived a Western ideal that is being imposed on African culture. This chapter has provided and discussed the findings of this study, the following chapter ties the findings with existing literature and draws conclusions from the manner in which the two relate to each other.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Central findings

Both female and male participants noted that in traditional societies the provider role was, rightfully, reserved for men. They justified the gender role division of traditional times with reference to women and men's biological differences. Their conclusion was that men were better suited for hard labour for their physical strength and women for the homemaker role because of their caring nature. They noted that in modern times people were freer to exercise personal choice, particularly women who wanted to enter the work force. They also noted, however, that performance of gender roles has not changed in the household particularly that the homemaker role remains women's responsibility. Both male and female participants were in favour of the change in the public sphere, i.e. the workforce. Considering the anatomical argument the participants put forward regarding gender role division, it became clear that the change of views for women to enter the work force had to do with a change in the job requirements, i.e. focus on intellectual and learned skills rather than physical strength. Male participants expressed a need for change in the household such that the homemaker role is distributed equally between the couple. Their argument, however, was not very convincing as they changed their opinions later and did not believe that women were equally sharing in the homemaker role. Female participants, on the other hand, considered the homemaker role a woman's responsibility and did not feel that it should change because of women adopting the provider role. They refuted the idea that performing the homemaker role and the provider role is overwhelming for women, arguing that the homemaker role forms part of a wife and mother's identity. Considering the reasons that the participants thought it acceptable for women to enter the work force, i.e. change in job skills demand, it seems that the physiological nature of the homemaker role has not changed and therefore women are still considered more equipped in it than men are. Furthermore, the female participants pointed out that entering the work force is not an effort to break down gender roles but rather an effort to protect them from abuse and to be able to make important decisions regarding their family. The male participants also expressed a concern that on the surface

women seem to be oppressed for the many roles that they are expected to fill, i.e. the homemaker role and the provider role. They pointed out that women may have entered the work force but they reserve their money for their personal use, largely they still expect men to provide for them and the family. It seems that the male participants would like to be equal with women but are still unsure how to address it as women do not seem to be making efforts for equality even though on the surface it may seem that way.

Participants who considered gender role division unproblematic, of which most were women, also perceived the lobola practice to be equally relevant for the modern period. The participants who opposed gender role division perceived lobola to have lost meaning for the modern period. They based their view on the practice' emphasis on gender role division while in the modern period there is more emphasis on personal choice. Both male and female participants noted that the practice might disadvantage women in power negotiation. The female participants argued that income-earning women might counter being disadvantaged because their financial independence will highlight that they have other options rather than entrapment in a marriage. Modern women, they argued, usually have their own income and this may be adequate to ensure an equal power position with their husbands. The male participants asserted that the practice is no longer relevant as men need not solely provide for the family and, therefore, it is no longer necessary to prove that they will be able to take care of the family. This highly contradicts their view that women use their money for their own benefit rather than the whole family. This may point out that the male participants want women to equally share in the provider role while the homemaker role remains women's responsibility. If women help in taking care of the family, then the male participants did not acknowledge this because it means that they would need to take part in the homemaker role. In another context where they need to fully own up to being a provider they want the pressure of being a provider to be alleviated through equal sharing of the role with women. Female participants on the other hand perceive the roles of women and men in lobola different but equal. Since the homemaker role remains the woman's responsibility even when women become providers (Tichenor, 2005), lobola payment may be the only compensation that women receive for their performance of homemaker role. It may be that the payment of lobola

signifies recognition for the woman's hard work and dedication and for this reason; women for whom lobola has been paid may be more satisfied in performing the homemaker role. The recognition through lobola may be likened to the wage that people earn for their work. This is in contrast to women who would otherwise not perform the role and are not compensated for it. Perhaps it is in such instances that there is a feeling of doing things for the benefit of others rather than oneself, which may result in the feeling of alienation from one's product.

The male participants pointed out a problem with the current practice of lobola. They felt that women were not in a better situation to negotiate power because of the increased prices of lobola. The problem was that families of brides are now concerned with making profits from the lobola payment and therefore charge a lot of money. Some female participants justified the reasons for high prices and argued that the parents' money used to educate the woman must be compensated, as it will benefit another family rather than the parents. Most participants were aware that African married couples no longer live with the husband's family, rather they have adopted the nuclear family lifestyle. In such a situation, it makes no sense to compensate the bride's family for an education that will benefit her and her immediate family rather than in-laws as well. The prescription of the provider role to the husband is salient in this situation, as it seems that the husband is responsible for providing for his family and should be cognisant of the help of his bride and in-laws for investing in an education. The compensation for the woman's education, therefore provider role, again means that there is an acknowledgement of the woman's help much as there is acknowledgement of her help in the homemaker role. It seems that while the woman has two roles to fill compared to the man who fills only one, the lobola practice offers compensation for these roles to make it equal. There is an exchange of capital for the woman's service towards her family. Unlike the 'double day' phenomenon that Gupta (1990) finds with women in general, with lobola the husband compensates the woman's family for service.

It seems that the problem with this compensation, as the male participants pointed out, is that the women's families, in their quest of making profits, charge very high prices that

even with an income, the women may not be able to pay the money back. The male participants, therefore; did not support the female participants' argument that an income allows women to negotiate power. The position of being unable to pay the money back, the participants argued, would expose women to abuse. Part of the concerns was that men who paid lobola generally feel a sense of ownership over the women and demand women's services towards them. The female participants felt that such an attitude is intolerable, that men should not feel that the woman must serve them. Again, this highlights the sense of control that women want to feel even when lobola has been paid for them. Even though the female participants felt that the homemaker role is a woman's responsibility, it seems important that doing this role does not appear as an expected routine but rather as something special that women do for their families and something that needs to be acknowledged and appreciated. Again, it seems that the feeling of alienation that may be encountered in performance of the homemaker role may be avoided when women are shown appreciation for what they do; appreciation may be the compensation that women need. Male participants felt that women could intervene in the negotiation process to ensure that the lobola price is not set too high. The female participants felt that women were not willing to do that because a lobola price reflected their perceived worth. The problem of entrapment because of a high lobola price may be a problem that women are not aware of. If lobola is compensation for their services to their families, though, it makes sense that women would want a higher price negotiated for them much similar to a worker who would negotiate a high wage.

While the male participants were generally opposed to the practice of lobola in modern times, they said that they would pay lobola if it was asked of them. They further explained that being against does not mean they should not abide by it as it is a cultural practice that they need to honour. Their cultural adherence in the midst of opposing views seems to highlight the reluctance for people to challenge culture openly. Further, considering that they felt the practice was a barrier to gender equality, it becomes a concern whether potential inequalities embedded in African culture can be addressed. Particularly since it is a collectivist culture and challenging it openly would be going against its values of group identity. Similarly, the male participants had their individual

views but in practice these would not count when confronted with others who had cultural views. The question, firstly, is whether it is possible to advocate for gender equality for the individuals who feel that African culture does not adequately address it. Secondly, the question is whether advocating for gender equality in African culture calls for culture change through incorporating gender issues into the culture. Lastly, whether gender equality is irreconcilable with African culture and thus calls for a cultural divorce.

Limitations and Recommendations

Face-to-face interviews have the advantage of allowing the researcher to build rapport with participants and, in the case of semi-structured interviews, allow the researcher to probe deeper and clarify when necessary. However, at the same time the researcher may influence the participants' responses by virtue of their position or perceived position in society. Similarly, the present researcher's gender and race may have influenced the responses of the participants in the study. The researcher suspects that her sex may have affected the gender groups differently in terms of sharing truthfully and being comfortable. Since the researcher's sex is female, the female participants may have felt more at ease in responding than the male participants. Male participants may have avoided responding negatively about women and gender equality in favour of women for fear of offending the researcher.

On the other hand, by virtue of being African black, participants may have labelled the researcher to be oriented to African culture and responded according to their judgement of the kind of responses that the researcher is looking for. Using focus groups as a data collection technique may have minimized the problem of researcher effects. Focus groups may have allowed a shift of attention from the researcher to fellow group members, participants' perceptions could have been challenged and this could have lead to truthful sharing of opinions. However, the interview technique allows for a more focused study of individualised cases that may allow a deeper understanding without the intervening opinions of others. They further allow the participants to share their opinion with minimised fear of being judged by many people, as may be the case in focus groups.

Thus, the importance of using focus groups in future studies need not undermine the findings of the current study obtained through interviews.

The researcher took care to include, as much as possible, the diverse cultural division within the broad umbrella of African culture in South Africa. However, presenting the findings of the study as applicable to an African black student population is to minimise the diversity that exist within the African culture as a collective culture. Further, highlighting the diversity makes the sample in the study unrepresentative as each cultural group under African culture is represented by one or two participants, in which case there is a lack of diversity of opinions for each cultural group. It may be useful in future to focus the study on one African culture subdivision to allow a larger sample of participants to be part of the study and thus more diverse representative opinions to emerge. The current study is useful, however, as consideration of the subcultures together highlights their points of similarities with regards to lobola and gives direction to a better approach for future studies.

Studies from a feminist perspective tend to overlook men issues and focus on women issues that emerge, a focus on men issues seems to be intended to support the women issues that emerge. In other words, feminist focused studies seem to study gender inequality as though it is an exclusively woman issue. This study seems to have followed in the trend perhaps because of the feminist framework that has been used in isolation, without consideration of theories that might have captured men's issues and challenged the women's issues and feminist theories. Exclusion of men's issues from gender studies, though not particularly intended in this study, may be justified considering that men have been privileged in the past (Ehrenheim, 1997). However, researchers following this trend of excluding men's concerns may repeat a reversed history of focusing on women's issue and ignoring contradicting information that may have been useful in enhancing the knowledge sought. This study found that the gender groups in this study misunderstood, or were unaware of, the other's opinions regarding gender equality. Future studies may attempt to make the gender groups aware of each other's perspectives and pave the way towards a united effort towards gender equality between women and men.

The study found that women could avoid subjection to power imbalances, especially abuse, by being financially independent from their husbands. Given that this was the perspective held by female participants on the main, it may be because the participants are in the process of receiving higher education and the chances of earning the same income as their husbands are high. The male participants argued similarly, raising the likelihood that women will earn the same amount of income and, thus, lobola will no longer be necessary, as a man would not need to prove he could take care of his wife and family. These findings are likely due to the purposive sampling used in the study, which makes the unique characteristics of this sample limiting in generalising the findings of this study. The characteristic that may account for the above-mentioned perspectives is the participants' tertiary education that possibly implies similar financial opportunities for the female and male participants. While the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the broader population, for the reasons briefly mentioned, they may generate important information for other studies concerned with a similar topic within a different context. In relation to this point, it would be interesting to explore the perceptions of a non-student and non-professionally qualified sample where there is still a large income division with the husband earning more than the wife does.

Social science students were purposefully excluded from the sample with the suspicion that their liberal education may influence their opinion towards the topic of interest. It may, however, be useful for a future study to explore the opinions of these students, whether they do support lobola even given the exposure to their type education.

The researcher attempted to integrate the theoretical framework presented as guiding the study as well as seek deeper meaning from the participants' responses in discussing the findings. However, the researcher's limited exposure to semi-structured interviewing, qualitative methods and thematic content analysis may present some limitations in the presentation and discussion of findings. Firstly, there may be an issue of the researcher not probing deep enough into the relevant issues or clarifying and challenging contradictions presented by the participants at the interviewing stage. Secondly, the

researcher may not have adequately explored issues in depth and successfully synthesised an integrative argument within the theoretical framework when analysing the data and discussing the findings. More exposure into qualitative studies of this nature will, most likely, assist the researcher in gaining the necessary experience to be able to present a tighter argument in future studies. Nonetheless, the findings in this study are still useful in giving a preliminary view of the topic at hand and suggest a worthwhile area of exploration by more experienced qualitative researchers.

Given the above limitations, the conclusions that have been drawn from this study should be regarded as exploratory and tentative. This study is valuable as it paves a way to further studies in the future, either more tightly designed or exploring other issues related to the topic. As discussed above, the perceived advantages that lobola offers the gender groups may have contributed to the different perspectives about the relevance of lobola in modern times. This study may inform policy formulation such that both male and female perspectives are taken into account when gender policies are formulated. Furthermore, the female participants did not feel that the homemaker role was unfair, which highlights the importance of paying attention to the needs of different cultural groups. This may be particularly important in South Africa considering that its political system needs to engage in strategies to ensure it represents and supports the views of all individuals.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What are your thoughts around South African men and women's positions in relation to each other?
2. What are your thoughts around men and women's positions, within your culture, in relation to each other?
3. Do you think there's a difference between your generation and the older generation (in terms gender equality)?
4. What do you know and understand about lobola?
5. Is it practiced in your culture?
What are the expectations around the lobola practice in your culture?
6. Do you see lobola in any way related to the positions of men and women (as we discussed earlier)?
7. What are parents' thoughts and feelings around your marriage in the future?
What are your feelings around your parents' opinions?
8. Has the practice of lobola changed over the years? How?
9. How do you think these (if identified) changes relate to the positions held by men and women?
10. Does a woman's level of education play a role in lobola negotiations?
Do you think it is justified for a woman's level of education to play a role in lobola negotiations?

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



School of Human and Community Development

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel: (011) 717-4500 Fax: (011) 717-4559

Hello, my name is SEBENZILE NKOSI, and I am conducting research for the purpose of obtaining a Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. My area of focus is that of the lobola system, and whether it is perceived to have any influence on how men and women interact. Part of the research aims is to explore perceptions held by a group of young African men and women regarding the role of the lobola system on gender power dynamics within modern society. That is, whether being married under the lobola system awards power to either of the married partners over the other partner. In addition to this, the study aims to explore whether these perceptions are similar or different between males and females.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by the researcher concerning the aforementioned research focus. The interview will last for approximately 30 minutes. With your permission this interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy of the information obtained. Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify you will be included in the research report. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by any person, except my supervisor, and myself and will be processed by myself. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

If you choose to participate in the study please sign the interview consent form and the recording consent form and return it to me. You can contact me or my supervisor in the case that you want a follow-up on the study's findings. Please bear in mind that feedback will only be given in group trends. My cellphone number is 076 894 9383 or email seven@webmail.co.za. My supervisor's name is Kgamadi Kometsi and his phone number is (011) 717 4558 and email address is Kgamadi.Kometsi@wits.ac.za.

Kind Regards

Sebenzile Nkosi

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM (INTERVIEW)

I _____ consent to being interviewed by Sebenzile Nkosi for her study on Lobola: perceptions about its role on gender power dynamics. I understand that:

Participation in this interview is voluntary.

That I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.

I may withdraw from the study at any time.

No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

Signed _____

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM (RECORDING)

I _____ consent to my interview with Sebenzile Nkosi for her study being tape-recorded. I understand that:

The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this organisation at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher.

All tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.

No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed _____