

**MALE HEADSHIP AND FEMALE SUBMISSION IN MARRIAGE AMONG AFRICAN
CHRISTIANS: A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the loving memory of my father, Joshua Maisiri 17 October 1932-17 September 2013, and to Nthembe my wife, for the unwavering support and encouragement she gave me throughout the entire period of study, and to my father in-law, Mr. Allan Mbewe for his value on education.

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Secondly, victory in putting this work together was achieved because of numerous people whose investments I cannot ignore. Space will however allow me to publicly recognize the following:

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SUMMARY

Upon entering into a marital relationship, an African Christian couple is faced with both biblical and cultural perspectives regarding the patriarchal idea of male headship and female submission in marriage. This is because headship and submission are both *cultural* and *biblical* issues. The African culture, just as the Bible, defines the position and the role of males and females and this presents a challenge for the African Christian couple regarding practice. It is important for pastoral care givers to gain insight into influences on married couples' understanding and practice of headship and submission and the implication this has for gender disparity as well as the consequences of gender disparity for the lives of people.

The study aims to explore biblical and cultural ideas of headship and submission in order to develop an understanding of, describe and explain African Christians' perceptions, attitudes and practices with regard to male headship and female submission in marriage. The context of the study is that of Shona culture in Zimbabwe. In order to gain an understanding of the issues on a grassroots level, 30 (15 males and 15 females) married Shona Christians from different churches in Zimbabwe were interviewed. The participants were selected by means of the random sampling and purposive sampling methods. Four main themes were identified and conceptualised. Data was analysed and discussed in dialogue with the theoretical underpinnings of the study in order to present a pastoral perspective.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned do hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, that all sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this dissertation has not previously in its totality, or partially been submitted for the attainment of a degree at another University.

DATE: 30/10/2015

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Glossary of Terms

Gender, equality, inequality, male headship, female submission, *Mahumbwe*, *ngano*, socialization, *Hupotasso*, *kephale*, *lobola*, patronage, patriarchy, African culture, *Magna Carta*, abuse, asymmetrical, love, symmetrical.

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CHAPTER 1

CULTURE, GENDER AND MARRIAGE

1.1 Introduction

In all societies over time men and women have been socialized differently because of the *biological difference* between them and the way in which different cultures assign *meaning* to this difference. Socialization affects people's attitudes with regard to their own and the other sex. The result is that different *roles* are assigned to the sexes. Such categorization of men and women tends to contribute to the regulation of their behaviour towards each other. The differences between men and women is accentuated and polarized by structures that are present in society. Factors that play a role in the socialization of people are, among others, culture, customs, religion and the church. These factors will therefore also have an effect on shaping people's understanding, attitudes and practices with regard to marital roles.

The traditional Christian view of marital roles and of male headship and female submission has been formed by both culture and religion. Working with Family Life, a pastoral care organisation in Zimbabwe, I encountered Christian couples with marital problems due to conflicting views regarding male headship and female submission in marriage. They claim to have a biblical understanding of how they should relate to each other. Men assert that their attitudes towards women are based on the Bible whereas women feel that their husbands use the Bible to force them into submission.

This study aims to investigate this issue of male headship and female submission as it manifests in African cultures and more specifically among married African Christians. Since African cultures have many similarities, but also differ in certain respects, the study will not presume to speak for all African cultures, but will focus on the context and customs of Shona-speaking Zimbabweans. The goal is to develop a pastoral care model, which takes biblical exegesis into account and is based on a theological view of male and female that is not enshrined in patriarchal theology, but is conducive to the well-being of both men and women.

1.2 Problem statement

When Christians get married, they, similar to all other couples, have to find a power balance in their relationship. Traditionally, Christian religion has propagated a relationship of headship and submission as enshrined in, for example, Ephesians 5:22-31. This traditional religious view is either supported or opposed by cultural views on the relationship between the sexes in marriage.

In their understanding and practice of male headship and female submission in marriage, African Christians have been influenced by both religious and cultural views, as well as by customary practices. African cultures contain views and customs that define the position of men and women. These views guide and rule marriage and family life (see Gelfand 1973:29-31; MacGonagle 2007:61). The point of departure of the study is that African couples understand and practise male headship and female submission in the context of these cultural views and customs.

Male headship and female submission is one of the basic issues in the discussion of sex roles in Scripture. Debates on this issue centre on passages such as, for example, Colossians 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:21-31. Ephesians 5:21-31 is perceived by some scholars, for example, Turaki (2006:1617), as the biblical model for all male-female relationships in marriage. Due to the fact that Christians use a Bible, which has originated in a patriarchal society, biblical patriarchy is often accepted in Christian communities as “the way things are, or even the way God want things to be” (Visser 2012:15-16). As a result, male domination is accepted as a “biblical norm”, and as therefore cannot be rejected. Other scholars, such as Olusola (2012:36) for example, suggest that passages such as Ephesians 5:22:24 are interpreted incorrectly by African Christians with regard to marital roles. These passages are often interpreted in a way that emphasises the submissive role of married women (cf. Djomhoué 2007:43). Treating Scripture in this way is, according to Kambarami (2006:4), nothing but the reinforcement of existing traditional customs, which enable males to control females. The African scholars mentioned above and some Western scholars such as, for example, Browning (2004:3-12), are of the opinion that there is a belief among both Christians and non-Christians that Christianity is the major cultural carrier of the subordination of females. This suggests that there is a

“link” between African cultural and traditional Christian views regarding male headship and female submission. The study aims to investigate the effect of both these influences on African Christian couples’ understanding and practice of male headship and female submission in marriage. An understanding of the underlying cultural and religious factors with regard to male headship and female submission in marriage that is conducive to the well-being of all parties is necessary for pastors to fulfil their hermeneutical role in pastoring, counselling and marriage counselling (see Gerkin 1997). People tend to take cultural and religious views for granted and therefore it is the pastor's task to interpret culture and religion. People assume that others have the same point of departure as they do. Where this is not the case, conflict can ensue. Conflict is difficult to resolve if cultural and religious points of departure are regarded as "the only correct way of thinking". Insights gained in this investigation can contribute to the more effective pastoral guidance of African Christians through marital difficulties that ensue due to different views on power in the relationship.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The general aim of this study is to develop an understanding, describe and explain African Christians’ perceptions, attitudes and practices with regard to male headship and female submission in marriage. Specifically, the study has the following objectives:

- to explore values and norms that guide and rule African Christian marriages, especially with regard to power relations;
- to explore how married African Christians define the roles of males and females in marriage, specifically with regard to power relations;
- to explore, describe and interpret practices that result from married African Christians’ perceptions of male headship and female submission in marriage.

1.4 Existing research on marriage, the sexes and Christian religion

African cultures manifest many similarities and also some differences and particularities with regard to views on gender, sexuality and marriage. This investigation is done specifically among the Shona people of Zimbabwe as an exemplar. The literature reviewed, provides a theoretical framework for the study. This work builds on existing knowledge and aims to contribute new insights (see Hofstee 2011:91) specifically with regard to the African context.

In the literature in the fields of gender and feminist studies as well as feminist and womanist theology, there is much discussion on the issue of gender inequality. According to Johnson (2006:280), most of the literature suggests that differences in male and female behavioural patterns are imposed by culture; hence there is a need to “eliminate all cultural elements that continue to foster traditional attitudes that the sexes might be differently gifted” (Johnson 2006:280). Cultural perceptions of “difference” with regard to the sexes have led to misconceptions of the meaning of “gender”. Some are of the opinion that gender studies, as a discipline, seeks to strip males of their authority and transfer that authority to women (see Harawa-Katumbi 2012:106). Men who cling to “their authority” in an unyielding way, often continue to oppress women both in society and in the home. Not only males have a misconstrued view of gender but also some females. Ayanga (2012:85) puts it as follows:

Gender ... for men in particular ... conjures up images of militant women who forcefully and emotionally want to become like men ... For some women, the term “gender” calls up images of their fellow women who have lost direction and who want to destroy the God-given mandate to be submissive and indeed only follow their husbands’ direction.

In society, culturally defined positions and the designated status of men and women often result in an unwillingness to openly confront the issue of gender inequality. Furthermore, the phrase “God-given mandate” in Ayanga’s statement is an indication of how the Bible is used to literally support oppressive attitudes towards females. Therefore, anything that

seems to oppose biblical patriarchy is perceived as hostility towards God and God's word (see Visser 2012:15-16). Such an understanding of the term "gender" will nurture the escalation of power imbalances especially in Christian marriages if no deliberate effort is made to come to terms with gender and what it entails (Harawa-Katumbi 2012:105; see Kimmel 2004:1).

An effort to understand the gender issue as an issue of injustice, would have to take into account how perceptions regarding gender differences are acquired. Some scholars (see Dorsey 1996:30; Heywood 1992:258) attribute the perception of gender difference to a socialization process that begins in early childhood. For Wharton (2012:37), it is "through specific processes that begin even before birth". This socialization process "transforms the *raw material* of biological sex into gender-differentiated personalities and behaviours" (Wharton 2012:37). The process of socialization can therefore be seen as a crucial aspect in defining perceptions and practices of headship and submission in marriage.

In African cultures, these perceptions are learnt through different forms of socialization such as story-telling or fire-stories called *ngano* in Shona (see Mutasa *et al* 2008; Hogan 2011:4), and playgrounds referred to as *mahumbwe* in Shona (see Gelfand 1973:23-24). In Shona culture, parents particularly want their children to be successful in marriage. Boys and girls are prepared for marriage from early on. Traditionally practical training is given at *mahumbwe* where the young boy and girl from the age of 12 onwards are paired off and allowed to pretend to be husband and wife (see Gelfand 1979:23-24). It is therefore ingrained in them as they are growing up that there is something wrong with a person who does not marry. Upon maturity, the girl's grandmother or aunt (usually the father's sister) would teach her all that is expected of her when she is married. This includes how to care for children as well as respecting her husband as the authority figure of the family. By the time these young people decide to get married, they already know exactly what is expected of them. As a result, most of them have strong traditional views regarding marriage.

In African cultures the position and status of males and females differ. Gelfand's (1973), extensive works on Shona culture reveal the extent to which, in a marriage relationship, the wife is dependent upon the husband. As a sign of her respect she is forced to submit to him (though seemingly willingly) in almost every aspect of life. This implies that she

has no power whatsoever, so much so that when executing her duties, she has to acquire his approval for everything she does. It also implies that the husband, as the authority figure, has all the power and can make decisions without consulting with her. As a submissive wife, she has to agree with all his decisions. Any sign of disapproval could be construed as not being sufficiently submissive. The emphasis on difference between African males and females is further highlighted by the way in which African women are perceived and how people deal with social issues. According to Mungwini (2008:204), issues that Shona women face in marriage, for example, oppression, can be linked to the value society attaches to men. This can be seen, for example in how “patriarchal social philosophy ... condones wayward behaviour as part of what defines the Shona men” (Mungwini 2008:204). African cultures have prescribed norms for “an ideal woman”. The two, considered to be most essential, are *marriage* and *motherhood*.

Marriage is a symbol of status and therefore much pressure is exerted on women to get married. This can lead to their entering into unwanted relationships in an effort to escape the stereotypes that come with being unmarried. Women do not have the power to escape abusive relationships. In marriage they are supposed to display “virtues of character” such as loyalty and submission to the husband. This has often led to women having a negative view of marriage and some who want to avoid being bound by the “rules and restrictive controls imposed by husbands and culture”, choose to remain single (Mungwini 2008:204). The other main factor that defines African women's identity is *motherhood*. If a woman refuses or fails to have children this can result in the husband taking another wife or divorcing her. In most cases, “due to the fact that motherhood has been considered as glorious, women have come to enjoy the role without questioning its oppressive side” (Mungwini 2008:207). Mbiti (1988:1) points out that childless women endure deep sorrow in African societies. The point of departure of this study is that ideas with regard to both *marriage* and *motherhood* impact severely on the issue of male headship and female submission in marriage.

The way in which marriage as an institution is perceived in traditional African cultures seems to have also affected the idea of male headship and female submission. In traditional Shona culture, as in many African cultures, marriage is essentially a contract between two families (see Bourdillon 2004:36). As a contract, its main purpose is for the family group to continue and grow into many generations. The marriage contract comes

into effect after the bride-exchange (*roora*) in the form of cattle, money and the like. According to Mahara (2001:162) the wife in essence becomes the man's "possession" after the bride-price has been paid. The notion is that, once she belongs to him, she is mandated to fulfil on his desires, especially his sexual needs any time he wants. Other than that, she also has to perform house chores such as making sure the children are well taken care of and also cooking. Bourdillon (2004:49) puts it as follows: "An inability to cook on the part of a wife is a serious shortcoming, which may lead to the break-up of the marriage... [I]f she cannot cook she is useless to him". This was the situation before the advent of colonialization.

The pre-Christian religious heritage of the Shona people sheds more light on male-female relations. In the pre-Christian religious heritage Shona men were considered the official custodians of the land and lineage. Males were therefore more highly valued than females. This situation was reinforced by the fact that the culture was and is patrilineal. According to Mukonyora (1999) females in the African traditional culture were seen as subordinate to males. They were socialized to see themselves as "foreigners" (*vatorwa*) in their husband's home – they did not truly belong there. They were given limited power, which was mainly confined to the domain of the household, especially the kitchen and garden. In practice this meant that their world consisted of being either in the kitchen cooking or in the vegetable garden. This was the reality of women when the first European colonisers came to Africa.

While it is often intimated that the coming of the European missionaries "exposed" oppressive practices with regard to women in African society, the attitudes of the colonisers towards Africans in fact had a negative impact on male-female relations in African marriages. When the white European missionaries came to Africa, they viewed most of African cultural beliefs and practices as negative and imposed their own European views on the African people (see Peadar 1970:4). Europeans sought to change some African practices such as, for example, marriage customs, which they viewed as demeaning to females. These European perceptions on African people and their ways of life, especially marriage practices, negatively affected the life of African people (see Mahara 2001:162; Mawere and Mawere 2010:225). According to Nyajeka (2006:91-106), Western ideologies destabilized the positive aspects of the African cultural ways of life. Specifically, with regard to Shona culture, Chigwedere (1982:4),

Bourdillon (2004:50) and Mawere and Mawere (2010:225) agree that degrading views of African culture and marriage practices were based on an insufficient understanding. Most of the literature has been written by people from outside of the culture who do not have an in-depth understanding of the realities of African people. According to them, the "truth" about Shona culture should be told by an insider.

One area in which the European influence was particularly damaging is the aspect of *lobola* and its implications for African marriage (see Ngundu 2010). In African cultures, *lobola* (or *roora*) contributes to the legitimisation of marriage. A couple can, for instance, move in together immediately after *lobola* has been received (see Ngundu 2010). This means that, without *lobola*, an African Christian couple is seen as "only cohabiting" even if a church wedding ceremony has officially taken place. Mawere and Mawere (2010:2) point out that *lobola* "is one part of the African traditional culture that has been dramatically affected under the guise of modernity". Europeans and other non-African peoples tend to consider marriage, Christian or not, as illegitimate without an official wedding ceremony and legal endorsement. Europeans tend to consider *lobola* as a tool used to oppress African women. This is seen by African scholars as stemming from a misunderstanding of the significance of the bride price in African culture.

In recent years, *lobola* has been intensely debated. *Lobola* is often seen as adversely affecting the power balance and roles in marriage. It has been labelled by some (see Stewart et al 1990:171-172) as "systemic evil," which propagates inequality between men and women, and which will continually be used to dominate and psychologically oppress women in the context of marriage. Similarly, Gelfand (1973:30) sees the payment of *lobola* as giving the husband overt power over his wife. A wife whose *lobola* has been received can be forced into a submissive role in marriage. The extent of this form of abuse due *lobola* is stressed by Holleman (1952:206-208) who points out that the husband "may beat his wife moderately when the occasion – neglect of household duties, disobedience or insubordination – warrants it". In the same vein is Hindin (2003:502) who observes that "much of the wife beating in Zimbabwe is likely to stem from gender roles and social expectations". However, the general cultural view tends to be that without *lobola*, the husband does not have authority over his wife. He can not claim her to be his property. In defence of *lobola*, Owomoyela (2002:32-33) sees negative remarks of *lobola* as misplaced since they misrepresent the true meaning of *lobola*. Such misrepresentation

has been perpetuated by the translation of the word, *lobola* as “bride wealth”. “Wealth” has the connotation of a market transaction and implies that large amounts are involved. Instead, *lobola* should be regarded as a token of appreciation to the bride’s parents. It unifies the families (Owomoyela 2002:32-33). This will then eliminate the connotation of *women as property*, which then leads to males having unfettered authority over women, due to *lobola*.

When dealing with a social institution such as marriage, it is important to consider the cultural aspects. In his article on equality in marriage, Whooley (2001:165) asserts that marriage as a social institution should be understood in the light of many cultural factors that have an impact on it. Should Christian marriage be seen as something unchanging and absolute, Christianity will have played a negative role with regard to the full personhood of women in life and marriage. In spite of using the same Scripture, Christians hold diverse views regarding gender roles, gender equality and male headship and female submission in marriage. This could be a result of theological orientations, which result in various differing views of Scripture (see Lewis and Hendricks 1999:135; Duncan et al 2006:ix-xiii). Since headship and submission are both biblical and cultural issues, some tend to view Scripture as reinforcing traditional customs used by males to attain power and authority over females (see Kambarami 2006). Others reject not only the cultural perceptions but also the religious perceptions of male headship and female submission. The question whether Christianity teaches male headship and female submission has long been debated. According to Knight (2006:177), Ephesians 5:21-33 should be seen both “as a divinely mandated leadership role for husbands in the marriage relationship and a divinely mandated submission to that leadership for wives”. This applies to African Christians as well (see Turaki 2006:1436). However, the Catholic view as articulated by Pope John Paul II is different. Cahill (2004:45) points out that Pope John Paul II “regarded subordination of females in the family to be injustice, and therefore a violation of women’s dignity and of the will of Christ”. The Pope did not rely on specific texts or sayings of Jesus taken out of context. For the Pope, male and female roles in family and marriage should be addressed in light of “the integral example of Jesus and the basic orientation of the gospel” (Cahill 2004:45). Cahill suggests that such an ideal would not result in hierarchy in marriage but rather in mutual giving of the self whereby couples give their lives in servitude to each other.

Indigenous African cultures are hierarchical and patriarchal, “with the husband acknowledged as *chief* of the household unit” (Townshend 2008:72). In this scenario, women take up subordinate positions. The church has also accepted this situation as further indicated by Townshend (2008:8): “The Church, generally keeps silent and allows the cultural norms to prevail but in many subtle ways reinforces male headship”. Looking at both the cultural conceptions and the biblical views that are commonly held regarding male headship and female submission in marriage, there is a pressing need to come up with an approach, which is favourable to both parties in an African Christian marriage.

1.5 Research gap

Studies in the fields of biology (see Federman 2006), psychology (see Kimmel 2004:72-92; Wharton 2012:38-49), sociology (see Baker et al 2007), anthropology (Kottak 2013: 403-423), and theology (see Lewis et al 1998; Strauch 1999; Piper et al 2006; Turaki 2006:1436) have investigated issues of male patriarchy and dominance and female submission, gender roles and gender equality over a period of many decades and contain a wealth of information. The contribution of this study is to approach the issue from a pastoral perspective and focus specifically on aspects that concern Christians in African cultures. Shona culture is a case in point, since very specific beliefs and practices are prevalent among the Shona people. The relationship between these cultural beliefs and practices and Christian beliefs beg investigation. Existing research comes from mainly Western theological perspectives. This study focuses on how Shona married Christians perceive male headship and female submission in marriage in order to contribute to the formation of an effective pastoral care model with regard to the guidance of married Shona Christians.

Headship and submission are common terms in both religious circles and African cultures. In marriage, the issue of headship and submission is often a cause of conflict and tension between husbands and wives. This study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge with regard to African marriage from both a cultural and a biblical theological perspective. It aims to shed light on the actual realities of married Shona Christians regarding male headship and female submission in marriage in order to contribute

insights for pastoral care and in counselling in an African context and specifically a Shona cultural context, regarding marriage, power and marital roles.

1.6 Research methodology

1.6.1 Theoretical framework

This section sets the methodology of the study by outlining the epistemological approach of the study, the paradigm used, the theories inquired, the process followed in the selection of participants, data collection and analysis, and the ethical considerations.

A *qualitative* investigation of the practices of male headship and female submission in marriage among African Christians will be done. This approach makes room for a closer and thorough engagement with people in order to fully understand their experiences (see Baloyi 2011:78). In this way data is gathered with regard to their core beliefs and the reasons why they hold such beliefs (Neta 2011:109). Male headship and female submission is a common Christian idea across the world. However, the experiences of people in different cultures will differ. Swinton et al (2007:33) observe that “knowledge of the other occurs when the research focuses on a particular individual or group and explores in depth ways in which they view and interact with the world”. This study focuses specifically on the married African Christians in order to explore and understand their experiences regarding male headship and female submission in marriage. This can only happen as one engages with them in order to obtain knowledge from the ground regarding their realities (Babbie 2011:4). The purpose is that the investigator, who in this case is a cultural “insider” be even further immersed into the world of the participants in order to understand and describe their experiences, from their standpoint (see Baloyi 2011:71). Practical theologians Swinton et al (2007:31) describe a qualitative approach as “a process of careful, rigorous inquiry into an aspect of social world”. The process therefore involves a deep and thorough investigation into ways in which human beings experience life in general, and the focus of this investigation, namely male headship and female submission in particular. As opposed to the quantitative approach, which is experimental in nature (Hair et al 2003:211), the qualitative approach uses words and

data collected and analysed in several of ways (see Braun et al 2013). The main objective in this qualitative study is therefore not experimental, but to discover meaning and develop an understanding of male headship and female submission (see Leedy 1993:140; Hair et al 2003:212). The aim of this study is to explore, develop understanding and explain African Christians' perceptions, attitudes and practices with reference to male headship and female submission in marriage. Because this is the aim, a qualitative approach to the collecting and processing of data is considered appropriate. It is an epistemological point of departure of this study that data is not collected in a theoretical vacuum but from concrete human experiences on grassroots level. From this point of departure, a relevant and effective approach to pastoral care with regard to marriage and especially power relationships in African Christian marriage will be developed.

The *social constructionist paradigm* will provide the framework for investigating, evaluating and understanding the experiences of the African people regarding headship and submission in marriage. This study regards social constructionism as an appropriate approach because it deals with the understanding of human beings as products of social processes (Burr 2003:1). Lock and Strong (2010:6) point out that social constructionism "is concerned with meaning and understanding as the central feature of human activity". Social constructionism departs from the premise that human beings are social beings who continually fashion who they are, what they think and what they believe through interaction with one another. Social constructionism does not hold anything as fixed or absolute (see Beasley 2006:135). Human beings and their cultures, as products of social processes, are always changing and the realities of the world in which people live are constructed daily as conversations are made with each other and as they go through different challenges and pressures in life (see Gergen (2009:4). As a result, there is nothing about people that cannot be challenged or opposed. The current understandings and practices of the Shona Christians, regarding headship and submission, which in themselves have been influenced and have changed over time, should therefore be open to constant evaluation, analysis, critique and questioning.

This study will be guided by a number of theories that provide "a framework for organizing and interpreting observations" (Newman et al 1984:5; cf Babbie 2011:33). The patriarchal view of male headship and female submission is a common phenomenon in cultures and religions and therefore a proliferation of theories exist that provide a framework for

organizing and interpreting the data gathered in this study. Theories can be more or less useful (see Silverman 2010:110) and will therefore be scrutinized carefully for their positive contribution to the aims of the study. This is especially necessary with regard to such a controversial topic where theoretical and exegetical insights span a broad spectrum and often stand indirectly in opposition. However, according to Hofstee (2011:92), theories are still “the best explanations we currently have”. The theories utilized by this study include the following:

- **Symbolic interaction**

Male headship and female submission is a human phenomenon, which takes place in the context of human life and interaction. The theory of symbolic interactionism is an appropriate framework for this investigation because it is both a theory about human behaviour and provides an approach to inquiring about group behaviour (Annells (2012:380). Its concern is how the "self" is defined through social roles, expectations and perspectives impressed upon it by society and those within society. In the paradigm of symbolic interactionism people are regarded as social actors who exist both in the natural and a symbolic environment and it focuses on how people interact through the use of symbols (Aksan et al 2009:902). Intrinsically, it suffices to say that in marriage, and especially with regard to male headship and female submission, couples tend to behave in accordance with the beliefs and customs of the larger cultural environment. Symbols in this regard can include rituals, words, gestures, rules and roles. Gender is approached by symbolic interactionists from the micro perspective: gender stratification is examined as it manifests on a day to day level, and the focus is on how gender roles are internalized by males and females (Crossman 2012:1).

- **Functionalism**

Males and females have different roles and responsibilities in marriage. This study investigates how these different roles and functions are distributed in society. The most significant forerunners of the functionalist theory in sociology were Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. The concern of functionalism is how social order becomes possible. Functionalism interprets aspects of society in terms of how they contribute to the stability of the whole (see Anderson et al 2005:26). Regarding gender, Crossman (2012:1) describes the functionalist approach as follows:

“Functionalist theorists argue that men fill instrumental roles in society while women fill expressive roles, which works to the benefit of society. Further, it is our socialization into prescribed roles that is the driving force behind gender inequality”. According to these theorists the different roles and responsibilities that males and females have in society are aimed at fostering order and stability in society, but the effect is that they also are the cause of gender inequality. To try and change such an unjust status quo could, according to this theory, cause social disorder and confusion.

- **Feminist theory**

This study focuses on an issue that is presumed to disadvantage women in a number of ways. Due to biological difference, women and men have historically been treated differently. Women have been relegated to the private or family sphere. These exclusionary consequences of differences led to the emergence of the feminist theory as women sought to define their position in society for the sole purpose of improving their position in society (see Fineman 1994:349). Feminist theory therefore advocates for the equal value of women in the society. Female persons should be accepted in their full personhood and should be able to fully contribute to society with all their abilities, gifts and talents. Their role should not be minimized and they should not be excluded, segregated or looked upon as inferior.

- **Habermas’ theory of communicative action**

The point of departure of this study is that male-female relations should provide a platform where husband and wife treat each other equally and have the right and the safe space to express their views and opinions openly and without fear. The home environment should be harmonious and nurturing and conducive to the well-being of all family members, irrespective of their gender or age. In order for this to become a reality, good communication is necessary. In this regard the study will employ the communicative action theory developed by the German sociologist and philosopher in the tradition of critical theory and pragmatism, Jürgen Habermas (see Sciulli 1992:300). Developed out of social concerns, Habermas’ theory “is grounded in a standard of procedural reason” with a proposition that the “sovereignty of subjective interests may be challenged on the basis of a set of intersubjective interests that is irreducible” (Sciulli 1992:300). This means that claims to truth can be freely discussed without fear of cultural interference or any

other inherent elements (see Steele 1992:435). This theory sets a platform whereby “all communication is open to being tested as to whether it is comprehensible, sincere, truthful and appropriately expressed” (Murphy et al 2010:7). For Habermas, communication at all levels must be *symmetrical*, thus eliminating any disparities due to status or power.

- **Structural consensus theory**

Socialization is a central element with regard to male-female relations. The study explores how structural consensus theory, part of the functionalist paradigm, explains socially constructed behaviour since this theory “refers to the way in which human beings learn the kinds of behaviour expected of them in societal settings in which they find themselves” (see Jones et al 2011:6). A child who grows up in a specific cultural context are expected to exhibit behavior traits that are in line with the rules and norms of that cultural group. To learn these rules and norms is essential for consensual interaction with other members of society. This makes socialization possible. Because of this social process, individuals in the same cultural setting tend to behave similarly, “because they are equally constrained by cultural rules” (Jones et al 2011:7).

- **Michel Foucault’s theory of power**

Power is an element that is present in all human relationships, including marital relations. In order to analyze how the issue of power affects male headship and female submission in African Christian marriages, Michel Foucault’s insights on power relationships will be utilized. Foucault’s analysis of the “exercise of power via bodies was seen as an alternative to Marxian treatments of power”. In Marxist views power was seen as the domination and coercion by those with sovereign power over those who are powerless in society (see Detel 1998:16). Foucault sees power not as overt domination or coercion, but rather as dispersed and pervasive, being everywhere and coming from everywhere. In this sense power is neither an agency nor a structure (Foucault 1998:63). In Foucault’s analysis, the effects of power need not necessarily be described in negative terms, but rather as something that “produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained ... belong to this production” (Foucault 1991:194). Foucault sees power as being in service of social discipline and conformity, with the function of setting rules and norms throughout society and also within

individuals. Through what he refers to as "bio-power", physical bodies can be subjugated and made to behave in certain ways. This creates a microcosm of social control of the wider population. Disciplinary and bio-power create a 'discursive practice' or a body of knowledge and behaviour that defines what is normal, acceptable, and deviant. It is a discursive practice that is in constant flux (Foucault 1991; cf Jones et al 2011:139-146).

1.6.2 Empirical investigation

Thirty participants with whom interviews will be conducted will be selected from both mainline and Pentecostal churches in Harare, Zimbabwe. The data base of churches will be provided by the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe. The method of selection for both the churches and the participants for individual interviews will be the random and systematic sampling methods. To ensure that ethical criteria are met, informed consent forms will be distributed before the commencement of every interview session.

Data will be collected by means of individual semi-structured interviews. An interview schedule will be prepared. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the informed consent form will be signed by the participant. With the participant's permission, the interview will be recorded. In the event that the participant does not permit recording, a notebook will be used to take notes of the interview. Initial codes will be put into themes. Thereafter, a second interview will be conducted. The data analysis will be conducted by means of recurrent themes. This will be done by comparing codes, concepts, and categories from the first to the last interview in order to identify similar concepts and categories. For these concepts will identified that will adequately represent the meanings. The participants to be interviewed will be made aware of risks, discomforts and benefits. This study involves the participant's time, so it might inconvenience them in one way or the other. The study might involve unforeseen costs, especially with regard to transport to the interview venue. As volunteers, the participants will not receive any incentives, either money or gifts. The study could benefit them and the broader community with regard to insights and knowledge that can be used fruitfully to enhance African marital relations and people's religious understanding. The results of the study can benefit pastoral practitioners who guide Shona Christian couples to address marital issues appropriately.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The participant may refuse to participate or stop participation at any given time during the interview without penalty. During the interview, participants may indicate that they are not willing to answer any specific question or divulge specific information. All information will be treated as confidential. In the event that a participant indicates availability for an interview, personal details will not be made available to any other person except the one carrying out this study. In the event that a participant withdraws from participating, their information will be destroyed. Data from this study will only be used for academic purposes, therefore it will be made available to the university and to scholars. The research report and any ensuing research articles will not identify the participants.

1.7 Chapter outline

This study contains six chapters. Chapter 2 orients the study within the broader African cultural context. In this chapter, male headship and female submission as it manifests in sub-Saharan African cultures is discussed. This is illustrated with a case study of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. Since I am from that culture and language group, I will do this investigation as an insider. Since there are many similarities with regard to values, norms and practices regarding marriage, sex and gender in African cultures, other sub-Saharan African *cultures* will to a large extent be able to identify with specific Shona views, insights and practices. In Chapter 3, a biblical perspective of male headship and female submission is given by focussing specifically on Ephesians 5:22-24 since this is the passage mainly used in Christian circles to address the issue of male headship and female submission in marriage. The results of the exegetical investigation specifically with regard to terms translated as “submit” and “head” are briefly presented in order to construct a theological perspective on the issue that could provide insights for pastors who deal with this issue in an African context. In Chapter 4, the empirical part of the study is presented. Narrative interviews with married Shona Christian couples will be conducted. The data will be described, processed and interpreted in dialogue with the theoretical material. Themes that will be highlighted include power and leadership in the home and marriage, marital roles and gender, *lobola*, as well as the broader theme of culture, which acts as a common denominator. Chapter 5 considers a pastoral care

perspective on male headship and female submission in African Christian marriages. Chapter 6 presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2

MALE HEADSHIP AND FEMALE SUBMISSION: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses an African perspective on male headship and female submission. All societies, including African and ancient biblical societies, allocate meaning to what it is to be male or female in that society, and assigns social roles to the sexes. These meanings and roles will be explored in order to identify the social dynamics behind the experiences of married Christian African people. These theoretical insights will provide the backdrop for the empirical section of the study where the specific experiences of some married Shona Christian believers will be investigated, described and interpreted.

2.1.1 The nature of African societies.

African societies are patriarchal. Patriarchy is a hierarchical social system in which dominant males have control over females, children and other "weaker" and marginalised people (see Jewkes 2002:1423). In a patriarchal society, this kind of social control penetrates all levels of society and all social institutions, including the institution of marriage. The control of males over females specifically has been linked to two social issues, namely gender-based violence and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS (see WHO 2004). In this regard most African governments have passed laws in an attempt to curb gender-based violence. In 2006, for example, the government of Zimbabwe passed the Domestic Violence Act (DVA), which was gazetted in 2007. A Zimbabwean newspaper, the *Herald* (Ngena 2012), reports that the purpose of the DVA is "to allow maximum protection for survivors of domestic violence, provide relief to survivors and long-term measures for the prevention of domestic violence". The introduction of the DVA draws attention to the reality and effect of power imbalances in African marriages. This discrepancy of power is present also in the marriages of Christian believers.

The Domestic Violence Act of 2007 was opposed by a group of married Shona Christian women. This they did through the media (see Mungwini 2008:207). According to

Mungwini (2008), these Christian women aimed at “protecting their marriages” against those “who claimed to champion women’s rights” but “were not genuine at all but wanted to destroy families and marriages” (Mungwini 2008:207). Attitudes such as these serve to reinforce patriarchy in society. It illustrates how women are socialised into accepting “the way things are”, namely that men are superior to women and are entitled to total freedom and to women’s dedicated unquestioning service. These socialised views contribute to women not daring to challenge men and their behaviour, irrespective of how damaging and unjust that may be. In a Christian context, such attitudes reflect a faith community that does not have much to offer to alleviate the problems caused for women by African patriarchal practices. The reason for this is articulated by Baloyi (2007:107) as that the “headship of man in the house has been of greater importance” than fairness or the well-being of women. The man’s role is to be honoured and supported as it is. This affects African Christians as well and due to culturally defined customs and principles that govern male-female relations, some Christian men and women find it aberrant to challenge the status quo. In such Christian homes marital relationships are defined mostly by the culture. To oppose these roles is to oppose culture and cultural structures. That, for many, is unthinkable.

Cultural elements that impinge on people’s lives in the way that patriarchy imposes on the relationship between the sexes, are *essentialist*. Mungwini (2008:205; cf Stevenson 2010:598) puts it as follows: “Essentialism refers to the existence of fixed characteristics, given attributes and ahistorical functions that limit the possibilities of change and of social organisation”. This chapter focuses on some such cultural elements in order to investigate how they affect male-female relations in an African context. According to Bourdillon (2004:3), a renowned researcher of Shona culture, “a man’s character to an extent lies in the traditions in which he was brought up and the experiences he has undergone, but anyone can change, especially under the influences of outside pressures”. Two noteworthy aspects are, firstly, that people’s character is, to a great extent, affected by the way in which they were raised and, secondly, that a different environment can lead to a new paradigm, since people can become detached from the customs learnt in childhood. With regard to African Christians, both these aspects are relevant. Mukonyora (2007:10) describes the situation with regard to cultural history and cultural roots among urbanised Shona people as follows: “Today, we find Shona people to whom ... historical facts are almost as remote as to the Western readers”. Some African

people live and work in urban areas while, at the same time, they also possess a home in a rural area where they have relatives with whom they have close ties. Even though people have often become urbanised, a close association with relatives who adhere to traditional culture can lead to the perpetuation of a cultural mind-set and cultural customs.

2.2 The Shona people of Zimbabwe

This study focuses on the African context and specifically Shona culture. Therefore, a brief background of this people group is provided. The Shona people constitute one of the largest cultural groups in Zimbabwe. The Shona and the Ndebele are the two major African groups in Zimbabwe and they constitute about 80% and about 20% of the indigenous people respectively (Ngundu 2010:14). According to Mukonyora (2007:7), during the pre-colonial period the Shona people migrated from the Congo region towards the Tanganyika Lake region before they settled in Zimbabwe. This Mukonyora bases on certain aspects of language and culture that the Shona share with people of Tanzania. However, according to Ngundu (2010:14), the Shona people's origin cannot be accurately ascertained. Whereas the Ndebele are mainly concentrated in the southern part of Zimbabwe called Matabeleland, the Shona, "settled in the northern, eastern parts of modern Zimbabwe, spilling over into neighbouring Zambia and Mozambique" (see Mazikana and Johnstone 1982:22-23; cf Owomoyela 2002). This study focuses mainly on the Shona people because this is the predominant population found in the churches chosen for this investigation and it is also my cultural background. The investigation is therefore done from an insider perspective, which has certain advantages. However, had the same study been carried among the Ndebele people (and other African groups) the results would most likely have been similar. This is because the Shona and the Ndebele have similar cultural traditions and a shared history (see MacGonagle 2007:8-10; Heaton 2009:210).

2.3 The sexes in the African context: From early childhood to adulthood

Traditional Shona culture has specific perceptions regarding headship and submission in marriage. Owomoyela (2002:9) puts it as follows: “In traditional Zimbabwe society, and in those across Africa as a whole, men and women had well defined roles and obligations that were specific and exclusive to their respective genders”. This means that there are clear boundaries with regard to male and female roles and tasks. A transgression of the boundaries is taboo and people who do not adhere to the rules would face serious consequences. The “proper way” is taught to children from an early age by means of the oral tradition, which is the way in which important information is passed on from generation to generation. Owomoyela (2002:89) points out that, since there is a lack of written accounts of African societies from before the arrival of Europeans, oral tradition has provided an understanding and description of African people and their cultures. Most of the early scholarly African studies were oral history investigations. Through oral traditional African people preserve and pass their traditional knowledge on from one generation to the next.

African societies socialize boys and girls in the gender roles expected of them. This is done by means of, for example, circumcision and other initiation ceremonies, as well as fire-stories [*Ngano* in Shona] (Otiso 2006:96). With regard to Shona culture, Mutasa et al (2008:36) put it as follows:

The Shona folktale has been used and is still being used for didactic purposes ... [It] contain[s] lessons for life, which are applicable to real life situations that are not lesson specific, but like proverbs, they are general and can be applied to most themes as long as the story-teller picks an appropriate *Ngano* for the situation.

Ngano can therefore be referred to as a “curriculum for life,” which teaches children morality and socially acceptable behaviour, thus preparing them for adult life (see Hogan 2011:4). The Shona value these teachings and this training since they ensure that

children grow up “well trained and ... ready to accept responsibilities of marriage” (Gelfand’s 1965:31). Hogan (2011:4) describes the value of stories as follows: “Stories go before us, to get us ready for the journey that is about to come into our lives”. *Ngano* therefore equip young people with the information and skills they need for adult life and marriage. According to Otiso (2006:96) these stories functioned to socialize young people into a certain mindset in how they “glorified desirable behaviours or moral traits and disparaged the undesirable ones”. The result is that, within the traditional African context, boys and girls grow up knowing clearly what is expected of them and how to perform their duties. There is no possibility of role confusion or encroaching on the other’s role.

Another method of teaching children, especially in the Shona traditional culture, is *mahumbwe* (role play). *Mahumbwe* focuses on the practical side of what is taught through *ngano*. Children play at *mahumbwe* in the presence of an elderly person to prevent any form of deviation (see Gelfand 1965:31). The presence of an elderly person is an indication of how important *mahumbwe* is for practicing Shona ways. The elderly are particularly important in this regard. Otiso (2006:96) puts it as follows: “Grandparents were integral and effective agents because they combined personal life experiences and heroics with freedom to broach sensitive subjects such as sex”. Life lessons are learnt in this way. In effect *mahumbwe* is like “a trial marriage but without sexual intimacy” (Gelfand 1965:31). Boys and girls mimic marital roles. The boys act as husbands and the girls as wives. The differentiation between the roles impart to Shona children that their roles in life will be distinctly different, both in the home and in society. This difference will also be of importance in their future marriage.

2.4 Gender status and roles

2.4.1 Socialisation into gender roles

The way in which young people are trained for their respective gender roles in traditional African societies shows that a clear distinction is made between the sexes. Boys and girls perform different roles in the home and outside. In the South African cultural context, for example, young girls are specifically taught to perform motherly roles whereas young

boys are taught to herd cattle, sheep and goats, and later on as adults, to provide security for their aged parents (see Afolayan 2004:194). Salm and Falola (2004:138) point out that roles in the family “are determined in large by age, gender, and status. Traditional household relationships revolve around rules of family etiquette that demand certain patterns of interaction and determine behaviour models”. The assumption is that such a scenario eliminates all confusion. African boys and girls know exactly what roles and responsibilities await them later in life when (not “if”) they get married. The idea that a couple should take time before marriage “to discuss and agree upon responsibilities” (see Chapman 2005:77) is a Western approach, which is largely rejected by African people. African males and females are taught their duties, roles, responsibilities and positions, both in the home and in the society. These are prescribed by culture (cf Taylor 2006:94-95; Owomoyela 2002:91; Otiso 2006:93-95; Salm and Falola 2004:138-140). All of this has to be taken into account if pastoral care is to be done in a way that is compatible with and effective in an African context. This also goes for a pastoral approach to pre-marital counselling in an African Christian context, since “social position necessarily shapes experience and perspective” (Kesselman, McNair and Schniedewind 2003:185). Accordingly, African men and women’s experiences and perceptions of headship and submission in marriage are influenced by their social position in their cultural society.

2.4.2 Status and roles of males

In African societies, males are the official guardians of the land and lineage (Mukonyora 1999:277). African societies in sub-Saharan Africa are patrilineal, in other words “kinship through males is stressed over kinship through females” (Bourdillon 2004:2). It is therefore customary that the wife adopts the husband’s surname and belongs with his family rather than with her own biological family of origin. This is viewed as sign of her submitting to his leadership. Should she not do so, it would be regarded with suspicion in the culture. As part of his duty as the head of his wife and family, the man fosters discipline, not only to his children but also his wife. Holleman (1952:277) describes it as follows:

A husband is entitled to beat his wife moderately when circumstances warrant such a punishment. Occasional disciplinary actions of this kind are, in fact regarded as normal

incidents of married life to which a woman will not seriously object.

Since husbands in the traditional African cultures are generally allowed to beat their wives, “violence is seen as an acceptable way to settle disputes and exercise control within marriage” (Hindin 2003:502). Females within the traditional African culture are therefore vulnerable to abuse and violence. This cultural justification of force and violence against women is a facet of the subjugation of Shona women in marriage, including Christian women in Christian marriages.

In the African traditional culture, the husband is seen as the sole provider of his family and the head of the household (see Charvet 1982:3). This is an aspect taught and ingrained in every male child. It affects their behaviour, and how they view themselves. If an African man fails to provide for his family, he feels inferior or insignificant and insecure as the authority figure in the household. On the other hand, being a provider makes the man feel superior and conscious of the fact that his wife is dependent on him. The extent to which this patriarchal order of control affects females and limits them to the domestic sphere manifests in the attitudes of most African women after their husband has died or after a divorce. A group of African women who were seeking government grants were asked why they should be given the grants. Their reasons were: “My husband died so I have no-one to look after me” or “I was deserted by my husband”, or “I do not have a husband” (see Kambarami 2006:2). This shows how the idea that an African man is the head and sole provider of the family results in “controlling” and disempowering women ever after the man is gone.

Another important role of the African man is to provide protection for his family. The illustration in Figure 2.1 (Zimbabwe Ministry of Education 1970:39) below illustrates the different attitudes and approaches in European and African cultures.



Figure 2.1: Roles of men and women (Zimbabwe Ministry of Education 1970:39)

The European man is exhibiting “gentlemanly” behaviour. The African man who walks in front, just carrying an umbrella while his wife follows heavily laden, indicates that the man should be free of luggage so as to be able to protect his family if needs be. The security of the family is more important than the “short-lived pain” of the wife carrying the heavy load.

2.4.3 Status and role of females

According to Makaudze (2009:122), European colonialists “propagated myths about gender relations of the pre-colonial period” and saw the social order in African cultures as “highly sexist and patriarchal at the same time oppressive and abusive to females”. For Makaudze (2009:122) the white settlers “disturbed” and “destabilized” indigenous cultures and their male-female relations, which before colonialism, were good and just to both sexes. Folbre (1988:61-70), on the other hand, argues that European colonialism only reinforced a system of patriarchal control that was already in place. Furthermore,

Makaudze (2009:122) seems to allege that it was inappropriate for colonialists to challenge the status quo in African cultures and that things should have been left alone and were acceptable as they were. Though Makaudze (2009:122) implies that there was no injustice with regard to gender in indigenous African cultures, he does not deny that in the past, even way before the arrival of the white colonialists, the status of males and females in society were vastly different.

In African cultures male dominance and female subordination still prevail to this day (see Kethusegile, Kwaramba and Lopi 2000:68; Townshend 2008:30). Females have traditionally played a passive role. Females were regarded as the keepers of the home and their roles and responsibilities mainly centered on the home (see Gelfand 1981:20). According to Charvet (1982:4) women in traditional African society are “taught to be obedient and submissive housekeepers”. The common notion is that women belong in the kitchen, which expresses that their domain does not go beyond household responsibilities, especially cooking and providing food. Women are therefore not in any way involved in crucial decision making. Furthermore, the failure on the part of women to perform their prescribed duties in the home, including performing conjugal duties, taking care of children and doing the cooking, can result in their being punished by the husband. It is culturally sanctioned that the husband could beat his wife if he deems her inadequate in her role as wife and mother (see Hindin 2003:501; cf Holleman 1952:277). With regard to sex, women are at all times expected to satisfy the sexual desires of the husband (see Messer 2004). When a man demands sex, the wife must comply without fail. The Zimbabwe Ministry of Education (1970:41) describes the historical situation as follows:

Under the pure African law, a woman was under perpetual tutelage. Before marriage, she belonged to her father or guardian. Upon her marriage, the guardianship passed to her husband and upon dissolution of her marriage, the guardianship passed back to her father.

The message from culture to women is that they are inadequate as separate human beings and never come of age. They remain dependent as children and are punished as children for “unseemly” behaviour. Traditional African females are socialized to find true

meaning for their lives only as people dependent on and subordinate to males. This results in their defining themselves only in relation to men (see Kambarami 2006).

2.5 Traditional African marriage

2.5.1 *Lobola*

In African societies, marriage is considered the utmost social importance for a number of reasons. One reason is that marriage serves to establish alliances between families and between communities (Salm and Falola 2002:130; cf Bourdillon 2004:36; Sobania 2003:138; Afolayan 2004:181; Otiso 2006:93). Therefore, extended families are involved from the beginning when marriage is initiated. They preside over the *lobola* negotiations. This has an impact on the conduct of the wife. According to Auret (1985:164), “she is still regarded as being subordinate to all her husband’s relatives”. Female submission is not only about her deferring to the husband, but also to the husband’s relatives.

Though there are various forms of marriage contract in African cultures, a marriage contract only comes into effect after the bride-exchange (*lobola*) has been done. According to Mvududu (2002:32), *lobola* refers to the custom of a man paying some form of property, such as for example cattle or goods, for the right or privilege to marry a woman. Today, money is commonly used to pay *lobola*. Radcliffe-Brown (1934; cf Owomoyela 2002:94-95) views the custom of *lobola* as some form of compensation given by the bridegroom and his family to the bride’s family for the “loss” of their daughter and the investment they had already made in her. After the *lobola* has been paid and blessings received from both families, the couple is regarded as married (see Ngundu 2010:19). It is only after having paid *lobola* that the man can claim possession of the wife. The wife then becomes subject not only to him, but also to his entire family (Mahara’s 2001:162). The paying of *lobola* for her implies that by right she is obligated to meet her husband’s needs and to take care of the children (see Auret 1985:164; Hindin 2003). Household tasks, including cooking for the husband, are now her responsibility. Bourdillon (2004:49) describes it as follows: “An inability to cook on the part of a wife is a serious shortcoming, which may lead to the break-up of the marriage ... if she cannot

cook she is useless to him”. In this case, the husband has the right to divorce her, or to send her back to her family to be taught how to cook well.

Lobola plays a significant role within the African cultures. Without *lobola* a marriage does not officially exist. According to Stoneman et al (1989; cf Ngundu 2010:8-19), nearly all traditional marriages in Zimbabwe were and are still expected to involve the ritual with regard to *lobola*, “a traditional custom that has endured for centuries” (Chireshe and Chireshe 2010:3). This custom has both a positive and negative effect on male-female relations. From an Afro-centric perspective, *lobola* is perceived positively as “an outward manifestation of a young man’s love for his wife and it is a safeguard for groundless divorce” (Andifasi 1970:28). Gelfand’s (1999:177) also expresses a positive regard for *lobola* and its effect on the people involved: “I personally would look on the payment of bride wealth as having the effect of giving the woman a value in the eyes of all especially the man. Here is a person who has value; someone who cannot just be taken”. The involvement of this custom signifies how couples and families take marriage seriously and also provides protection for the rights of both men and women (Townshend 2008:34). More so, *lobola* unifies the family of the wife and family of the husband (Owomoyela 2002:94). *Lobola* furthermore conveys appreciation to the bride’s family for having brought her up well (see Chigwedere 1982:130). The payment of *lobola* can be seen as the guarantee for the woman and the children of their right to resources in the husband’s kin group and a place in the kinship structure (Nyambedha 2004:140). This gives women and children a sense of belonging in both the husband’s family and the woman’s father’s family.

On the negative side the practice of *lobola* is considered by others to be oppressive to women for various reasons. The payment of *lobola* is equated with “buying a wife” (see Wiley 2009:363). Gelfand (1965:14) elaborates as follows: “The fact that a man, has paid *lobola* for his wife, bestows upon him the right to regard her and his children as his property and she knows this”. Ndulo (2011:94) hints at contamination of this customary practice by Western cultures: “*Lobola* has become what Westerners alleged was a ‘bride price’ and has ceased to be a source of African pride”. For many it simply provides a basis of the oppression of women by men (see Chireshe and Chireshe 2010:218; Townshend 2008:34). Vijfhuizen (2002:57) points out how this custom can contribute to the husband’s power and the wife’s powerlessness: “The husband increases control over

his wife, by arguing that he paid bride-wealth and therefore expects his wife to work hard and give him many children". Bourdillon (1993:39) sees it as the foundation for the husband's sense of entitlement: "The husband feels that, after all his sacrifices, he has a right to everything that the wife produces". The result is that the payment of *lobola* can be seen as rendering the wife powerless and giving the husband the right to do as he wishes. He paid for her, which means that she is his property, which he can keep or dispose of as he sees fit. It is but a short step to various forms of abuse. According to Chabata (2012:12) the escalation of violence against women has to do with the large sums of money African men pay for *lobola*. The assumption is that this contributes overtly to the control over women by their husbands. Should he judge her to be "under-performing" considering the amount of money he had paid for her *lobola*, he has the right to punish or discard her (see Chabata 2012:12).

From "discipline" and "punishment" to abuse and sexual abuse, is another short step. Married men's absolute control over all matters sexual does not only infringe women rights and human dignity, but also exposes them to HIV infection. Chabata (2012:13) puts it as follows: "Some married women find it very hard to negotiate safe sex since their husbands simply say '*Dzakaenda dzakapfeka macondom here?*' (Did the cattle we paid go with condoms on?)". Again the perception is that if *lobola* has been paid, a woman has been bought and could therefore be used as the husband wishes (see Gustafsson et al 2006:5). The implication is that if *lobola* had not been paid, the woman would be free to walk away should conflict ensue in the marriage. If there were no *lobola*, the woman would not be bound by anything. In other words, her commitment to marriage is determined and controlled by the payment or non-payment of *lobola*. This affects the power relationship of headship and submission in the marriage. Without payment she would owe an abusive husband nothing.

African women for whom *lobola* has been paid, face exceptional challenges with regard to solving marital conflict as well as with how to deal with oppressive and abusive husbands. When faced with conflict, African married women in general approach their aunts (usually the father's sisters) for advice. According to Chabata (2012:13) the kind of cultural advice the aunts generally give amount to: "*Chingotsungirira mwana wehanzvadzi yangu, yeuka kuti murume wako akabvisa pfuma. Kana ukamuramba tinoiwanepi mari yekumudzorerera?*" (You just have to endure my niece, remember your

husband paid *lobola*. If you divorce him, how are we going to repay the *lobola* he has paid?) As a result, African women tend to endure marriage, not because they love the husband but because they protect their family of origin from shame and ridicule for failing to repay the *lobola*. Should the husband choose to use excessive force, she has to bear it.

In spite of the negative impact of *lobola* payment, the custom is still held as essential to the solemnization of African marriages (Ngundu 2010) and as an essential aspect of the cultural heritage of the Shona people (see Chireshe and Chireshe 2010:215). It is a custom to which both men and women adhere. For women, it could represent “a sense of commitment and love for the man” (Possel et al 2011:108). Christian churches in Zimbabwe tend to support the custom of *lobola* without being critical of the possible negatives aspects and abuses that could accompany it. Cultural customs, including *lobola*, should be scrutinized critically in the light of the Gospel message of love. No amount of money or wealth can be equated with the value of a human being. As such women should be treated with human dignity at all times, regardless whether *lobola* was paid or not.

2.6 Summary

This chapter highlighted how male headship and female submission manifest in traditional African cultural societies. African societies have their own values and belief systems, which are transmitted to children from a young age. Methods used to teach children this include story-telling and role-playing. A child growing up in an African society is expected to adhere to the beliefs and customs of that culture. Cultural essentialism was identified and the role it plays in male-female relations was discussed. As a custom, the African men have to pay *lobola* in order to marry. This custom provides them with authority over the wife and also unifies the two families. The positive and negative aspects of this practice were been highlighted. On the positive side is the ancient tradition of uniting the families of the bride and the groom and expressing the value of the woman and the contribution of her family to her life. On the other hand, *lobola* has been seen as a catalyst for fueling inequality between husband and wife in marriage. Due to *lobola*,

women are often forced into submission by their husbands who claim that they have paid for them and expect their just rewards in turn. It is a point of departure of this study that within the African culture, power is influenced by cultural elements of which *lobola* is a significant one. Further studies should revisit this aspect and indicate ways in which abuses can be eliminated. Such efforts could contribute to helping African men and women find a power balance in their family and marital life.

CHAPTER 3

MALE HEADSHIP AND FEMALE SUBMISSION: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly explores the exegetical possibilities of Ephesians 5:22-24 in order to shed light on the theological influence of this passage on the relationship between Christian men and women in marriage. The particular interest of this study is how this biblical passage influenced and still influences the attitudes and practices of African Christian couples. The focus is on their perceptions of specifically male headship and female submission in marriage. The question is whether their views are predominantly influenced by culture or by their faith and the Bible and how these two influences impact on each other. This chapter contributes to a theological framework for the empirical part of the study in the following chapter.

Male headship and female submission in marriage is not only an African phenomenon. It has been prevalent in patriarchal societies throughout the ages and is also to be found in the Christian Bible, since 1st century Mediterranean societies were patriarchal and these are the cultures in which Christianity originated. The Bible, especially in the New Testament, overt statements of male headship and female submission are to be found in Colossians 3:18 and Ephesians 5:22-24. These New Testament passages are held by some Christian scholars, for example Turaki (2006:1436) as instructions for husbands and wives in every culture, African cultures included, on how marital relations are to be conducted. Scriptural passages such as these have traditionally been used to support male headship and female submission. This often led and still leads to the abuse of women (see Olusola 2012:36). Browning and Clairmont (2004: viii) put it as follows: “Many people believe that Christianity is the major cultural carrier of the subordination of females”. In Africa there has been an increase in advocacy groups (feminist theologians among others) who speak against the oppression and abuse of women (see Baloyi 2008:1). Whereas some see Bible passages such as these as direct instruction because they are in the Bible, others find that some (cultural) beliefs and practices in the Bible are not necessarily in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Cultural elements should

be evaluated in light of the “cause of Jesus” (*die Sache Jesu*), as New Testament scholar Willi Marxsen (1976; see Van Aarde 2001) puts it. From an African perspective, Baloyi (2008:8) cautions that Scripture can easily be distorted and give rise to abusive practices if believers fail to understand it in its cultural setting (Baloyi 2008:8). Understanding the context of biblical passages and evaluating them in light of present-day contexts can contribute to a more accurate reading and a relevant application of Scripture in the world of today.

A frequently used New Testament passage on male headship and female submission is Ephesians 5:22-24. The way in which this is interpreted and enforced in practice is often as an instruction for wives to submit to their own husbands. Since a woman ought to submit to her husband in everything (verse 22 and 24), it is interpreted that she should not question him in anything he does and says. The reason given for the wife’s submission in the text is that the husband is the “head” of the wife. This text is often used for weddings ceremonies, mainly to emphasise the submissive role of the married women. The role of the man as outlined in the same passage is rarely or not at all mentioned (see Djomhoué 2007:43). This could explain why some married Christian experience that their husbands use the Bible to oppress them. Exegetical studies on Ephesians 5 provide a great variety of results depending on which theological tradition forms the point of departure and which exegetical tools are employed. This chapter will now briefly explore some exegetical possibilities with regard to Ephesians 5:22-24 in order to shed light on the theological influence of this passage on the relationship between men and women in Christian marriage.

3.2 Background: Ephesians 5:22-24

3.2.1 Authorship

A brief overview of issues regarding the authorship and recipients of Ephesians will be given in order to ascertain the purpose of the epistle. The authorship of Ephesians is a much discussed and rather complicated matter. The authorship of Paul, which was traditionally accepted has long been denied by scholarship (see Carson et al 1992:305;

Ehrman 2004:283). According to Malina and Pilch (2013:16), the author “claimed to be Paul,” which implies that it was a pseudonymous letter by someone who was probably well acquainted with Pauline theology. Muddiman (2001: vii) puts it as follows:

Ephesians is not a genuine Pauline letter but a *catholic epistle* intended for a wide circulation, written by a later disciple who knows Paul’s writings and was particularly well acquainted with Colossians, which served as a model.

The author was from the Pauline school and the letter was probably written between 80 and 90 CE in Asia Minor (see Schnelle 2007:557). The close connection between Ephesians and Colossians is what has led most scholars to treat Ephesians as a pseudonymous letter (see Muddiman 2001:7; Thielman 2010:8). There is so much overlap between these two letters, which may have suggested that one author used the other as source or that both used a common source. Some (see Pregeant 1995:422; O’Brien 1999:10-11) find that the author of Ephesians used Colossians and expanded on it. Others (see Foulkes 1989) find that the similarities between Ephesians and Colossians are not such that the one could have been copied from the other. The best way to account for the similarities and differences would then to deny the authorship of Paul and explain “that someone else, whose mind was full of the thought and expression of Paul’s letters, and especially of Colossians, wrote at a later date in his [Paul’s] name and imitated his work” (Foulkes 1989:27). The fact that the letter mentions “Paul” explicitly is one other argument among many, in support of Paul’s authorship (see Carson et al 1992:305). The point of departure of this study is that the author of Ephesians is not known and therefore this study will simply refer to the author as: “author of Ephesians” (*AE*).

Though there are different camps regarding authorship of Ephesians, there are no major arguments to contradict that the book of Ephesians indeed contains Pauline theology, and therefore has also found its place in the canon (O’Brien 1999:39; cf Carson et al 1992:312). O’Brien (1999:39) emphasises the authority of Ephesians as follows: “On the question of the letter’s authority and inspiration, recent advocates maintain that the pseudonymity of Ephesians does not in any way detract it from its canonicity or from the validity and authority of its message”. In light of this, the implication is that whether Ephesians was written by Paul or not, it is authoritative in matters of faith and practice. It

is relevant to this study because of its specific interest in a text that ostensibly deals with “instructions for male-female relations in marriage”. This information contributes to an analysis of the text against the backdrop of the whole scope of the Bible.

3.2.2 Recipients and purpose

Ephesians was probably sent as a circular letter to the churches in Asia Minor (see Carson et al 1992:310; Schnelle 2007:558). In the text itself, for example in Ephesians 1:3, it is reflected that the recipients were “men and women whom God has blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ”. The assumption here is that the recipients have found faith in Christ as is implied in the statement in Ephesians 1:4-5 that they had been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (see Hoehner 2000:616). The recipients were beyond doubt believers (see O’Brien 1999:50). The *AE* was therefore not writing to novices in the Christian faith but to those who were already walking in the faith and desiring to grow more into maturity (Tenny 1975:319). Since this is also where modern-day believers find themselves, this letter can also be an inspiration to their journey in faith. However, in contemporary interpretation of the text it is of importance that the application be non-patriarchal in its theological view of male and female in order not to view ancient cultural practices as authoritative for a life in faith today. In order to distinguish carefully between social and cultural systems of a bygone era and a message for faith today, the cultural environment and other cultural “elements” should be identified. Then only can implications be drawn for the church and the lives of believers today.

According to Schnelle (2007:558), the purpose of Ephesians was to attempt “to save the endangered unity of the church, which is composed of the Jewish Christians and Christians of Greco-Roman religious background”. This suggests that the church was in danger of a split. Others (see O’Brien 1999:47) do not deem this likely and find that there was no specific purpose that prompted the writing of Ephesians. The letter was basically meant to give instruction in matters of faith and practice to its readers (see Carson 1992:311; Ehrman 2004:283). Headship and submission were among the issues addressed. The *AE* could have, from his observations of the Greco-Roman cultural practices, noticed that this was something that needed to be addressed to help Christian couples achieve some sort of peace and harmony in their marital relationships.

3.3 Greco-Roman culture and Pauline theology

The setting of the New Testament, including the Letter to the Ephesians, was Greco-Roman society and culture. It was a highly patriarchal society where the father had absolute power – he was the *paterfamilias* (Lampe 2003:488, 489). As the “head of the house”, he had the final say in all matters. He even had the legal power to punish a member of his household with death. Though in some spheres women, particularly those in the Roman upper classes, were extremely influential and wielded great power, this power was always under the control of men who could withdraw it at will. The *Haustafel* or household codes were well-known in the *AE*’s environment (see Sampley 1971:157). He did not change the basic ideas that were to be found in Greco-Roman house codes, including the injunction of the submission of the wife to the husband. However, he did bring a new perspective to it, namely the motivation of the newness of their lives *in Christ*.

In Greco-Roman society the system of *patrocinium* or patronage defined individuals’ identity more than their social standing (see Lampe 2003:488-489) and covered a wide spectrum of social interactions, including marriage (Downs 2009:129). This system entailed the reciprocal exchange of goods among people in a personal but asymmetrical (patron-client) relationship of some duration (Downs 2009:133). The patronage system was hierarchical, the patron above and the client below. People were not regarded as equals and were therefore also treated unequally. Relationships were based on the one person having more power and the other less. This inevitably led to the widespread exploitation of the “weaker persons” in the relationship, namely the “clients” (Downs 2009:156). The social model of patronage therefore entails “an asymmetrical relationship involving reciprocal exchange between parties of unequal status” (Downs 2009:137). Pauline interpreters apply the model of patronage not only as a model governing social structures in Pauline communities “but also the very structure of Paul theology” (Downs 2009:130). The question is therefore whether Pauline theology is indelibly marked by the mind-set of patronage.

Though patronage as a social structure of relationships based on power, which is prone to the exploitation of the weaker members of the society and to promoting competition, was the prevalent system in Paul’s time, Downs (2009) argues that it does not define

Paul's theology, worldview or view of God. In Pauline theology familial language (defining both God's relationship with humans and human relations) is used to encourage believers to embody "horizontal relationships of reciprocal exchange". This is summed up as "fictive kinship" (Downs 2009:153). Scholars such as, for example, O'Brien (1999:405) have explored the origins of the household codes (as in Ephesians 5:22-33) in order to try and establish whether they derive from Stoic moral philosophy, were a Christian creation, or came from Hellenistic Judaism or the Greco-Roman world. Some scholars (see Best 1997:189-201; Blackaby 2006:1411) find that the *AE*, in the explanation of the concept of headship and submission, "borrows" from an existing Greco-Roman social structure. These concepts were not new for the readers of Ephesians. However, it seems that, if one is to approach the issue from a "fictive kinship" point of view as Downs does, there is another possibility. This will be discussed further in the brief overview of exegetical scholarship of the Ephesians 5 household code.

3.4 Submission and headship

Greco-Roman society was hierarchical and patriarchal. Females newly freed in Christ, could have considered submission difficult or even redundant in their new faith. On the other hand, Christian males, who had been used to the Roman custom of unlimited power as the head of the family, could have found it difficult to treat their wives with the respect and love demanded by the Christian ethic. The household code of Ephesians 5 could have been addressing this situation, the author making the Ephesian Christian community aware of what Christian relations ought to be (Wiersbe 1989:50). No husband and wife can possibly model their relationship on Christ if they themselves are not in Christ. Curle (2013:110) puts it as follows: "The Bible emphasises God-consciousness as the undergirding principle through which he works". In other words, the gospel of Christ should influence Christian attitudes and practices both in their own lives and in relation to others.

In the early church, believers gathered in homes. Osiek et al (2006:131) emphasises that, in the house, the role of the mother is recognised. This could, according to her, have had "significant consequences for the running of the community". People learn from imitating

the actions of others, especially leaders. In the house churches the respectful conduct of the leader and his wife could have served as a role model to all gathered there. The *AE*'s call of submission and headship in marriage could have been of prime importance for a Christian testimony not only to each other but also to the community as a whole (Poythress 2006:246).

The New International Version (NIV) of the Bible translates Ephesians 5:22-24 as follows: “*Wives, submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything*”. This text is resonant of 1 Corinthians 11:3, which in the NIV says, “*But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God*”. Here, a hierarchy of power is also given in which the man is the head of the woman. In the Ephesians text (5:22-24), the relationship between husband and wife is parallel to that of Christ and the church. Just as the church is submissive to and dependent on Christ, the wife should submit to and depend on her husband in everything. According to verse 24, the wife’s submission should be unconditional and unlimited. This has been interpreted over the centuries as suggesting that the wife ought to do as the husband pleases regardless of whether it is right or wrong. The passage was then used to confirm male dominance over females. It is seen as a biblical command for marriages of all times (Turaki 2006:1436). Many scholars (see Sampley 1971:158; O’Brien 1999:399; Hoehner 2000:640) have pointed out that the misunderstanding stems from the failure to realize that Ephesians 5:21 is part of the “household codes”. Sampley (1971:158) emphasises that verse 21 “stands as a superscription to the entire *Haustafel* ... All familial relations are governed by mutual submission in the fear of Christ”. O’Brien (1999:399) sees verse 21 as a “*hinge* verse ... [a] participle dependent on the imperative *be filled* (v. 18), and it concludes the list of responses that should characterize the Spirit-filled living of those in Christ (vv. 18-21) ... [and] introduces a new topic of *submission*, which is then developed throughout the [the rest of the chapter] ...” The implication is that all Christians, male or female, are placed on the same platform, eliminating all gender disparity (Mollenkott 2003:40). Both husbands and wives ought to firstly submit to each other in the fear for Christ.

The idea that the springboard for submission is first and foremost to be mutual, is further strengthened in the fact that v. 22, in its original meaning, is entirely dependent on v. 21. The reason is that v. 22 does not contain any verb, but leans on the verb (submit) in v. 21 (see Hoehner 2000:640; Mollenkott 2003:46). The implication therefore is that if one is to read verse 22 alone without verse 21, it would read: “Wives to your own husbands...” and the verse wouldn’t make any sense. Therefore, verse 22 is grammatically connected to verse 21. As a result, Gaebelein (1978:75) suggests that verses 21 and 22 read together should be understood as: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, wives to your own husbands as you do to the Lord”. Reading this verse with the original background in mind, it is noted that both sexes are treated with equal regard. According to Malina and Pilch (2013:26-28), the focus of this text is on the management of the household economics; with a focus on “production, self-sufficiency and family business organization”. The text therefore does not focus on disparate male and female value or position but rather on the day to day business of the home. If the *AE*’s focus would have been to show gender disparity, he would have omitted verse 21. Its presence therefore means that it is part of the bigger picture of the male-female relations as stipulated in this passage in Ephesians. To omit it would be to distort the intention and whole and full meaning of the text.

The two terms in Ephesians 5:22-24, “submit” and “head”, are commonly considered to be related to *male headship* and *female submission*. This, however, is not the only possible interpretation. Other exegetical avenues will now be explored. The Greek form of the verb translated with “submit”, is *hupotasso*, which according to Park (1987:117-118; see Clark 1980:136), “is a compound word made up of the preposition *hupo*, which means under, and the verb *tasso*, which means to arrange. Thus *hupotasso* means to arrange under”. According to Wright (2000:24), the active form of the verb is a military term, which “signifies an externally imposed submission based upon someone’s rank, or position, just as a private or sergeant would submit to a captain or lieutenant”. However, in Ephesians 5:22, the verb “submit” is in the passive form. Gundry (1977:72) points out that “if the verb is in the middle, it is not a compulsion, not external pressure, but internal prompting. It is also not a yielding under constraint, but with ready mind”. Knight (2006:166) concurs with Gundry and points out that the Greek-English Lexicon “describes this as submission in the sense of voluntary yielding in love, a characteristic of the Christian community”. This eliminates the distortion that currently persists in many

Christian circles, whereby women are forced to submit to their husbands whether there is justice in their demands or not, and which can result in women being oppressed and abused by husbands.

The call to submission is directed at all Christians – *all* ought to submit to one another. Clark (1980:136) points out that the term *hupotasso* does not only mean to submit but also “to behave responsibly toward another, to align oneself with, to relate to another in a meaningful way” (cf Barth 1974:609). According to Wright (2000:24), *hupotasso* as used in Colossians 3, Titus 2, 1 Peter 3 and Ephesians 5, “... is not something arbitrarily done to you: it is something you do voluntarily to yourself”. The implication is that the verb *submit* as it is used in Ephesians 5, does not mean subjugation or slavery (Wiersbe 2002:76-77). Barth (1974:609) puts it as follows:

The single imperative of verse 21 [that is, subordinate yourselves to another] anticipates all that the author is about to say not only to wives, children and slaves, but also to husbands, fathers and masters, about the specific respect they owe because of Christ to those with whom they live together either by choice or by birth, or by historical circumstances.

This implies that in a Christian context relationships are to be inclusive and not hierarchical as in Greco-Roman cultures. The *AE* is making it clear that people are not to see themselves as superior to others. Male-female relationships should be based on love not power and subordination. Ephesians 5:22b, with its emphasis on “as unto the Lord”, points to a response to his love. This is because subjugation, in its strictest definition as given by Stevenson (2010:1773), means to “bring under domination or control, especially by conquest”. In a sense, it refers to defeating somebody and making them obey you. Scriptures do not command people to subjugate others; neither do they ask wives to obey their husbands. The call is to submit to one another. More so, the wife is called to submit to her husband as unto to the Lord. This submission, as Hoehner (2000:640) indicates, does not mean that the husband is to be put on the same level with Christ but “rather her submission to her husband is her service rendered to the Lord”. This explanation is rather obscure and can make it difficult for females in abusive relationships. It could be easily implied that if a woman in such circumstances finds it difficult to submit she is doing

disservice to the Lord. Djomhoué's (2007:47) explanation casts more light as he observes that to correctly understand the real sense of Ephesians 5:22, notice has to be given to the comparative adverb *as* used in the expression "*as to the Lord*". This adverb is first used in verse 22b in line with the woman's role and also in verse 25 on the part of the male. As a result, one cannot understand the roles of both husband and wife as required in Ephesians 5 other than that both husband and wife look to Christ with whom they identify in their relationship. The assumption therefore is that both the husband and the wife should model all they do on the Lord. This changes how the term "head" is to be understood.

The term "head" as used in Ephesians 5:23, is translated *kephale* in Greek and means "head (of body), top (stone in a building); by extension: someone or something in the primary place, the point of origin" (Goodrick and Kohlenberger 1999:1564). Park (1987:119) is of the opinion that the definition for *head* most suitable to the context of Ephesians 5:22-24 is that of "one entrusted with superior rank, authority or power". The question is whether this description entails that males are in a way permitted by the Scriptures to subjugate females. Olusola (2012:40) cautions that this kind of interpretation does not represent adequate exegetical principles: "The meaning of this passage has been distorted because of the assumption that *kephale* means ruler, leader or boss in the same way that the English *head* can carry this figurative meaning". Olusola (2012:36) argues that, if the author "wanted to convey the idea of authority, he would have chosen the word *archon* ... [which] conveys the idea of leader, ruler or commander". The assumption therefore is that the author seems to have chosen *kephale* with its common Greek meanings of source, beginning or completion (Olusola 2012:36). However, Grudem (2006:425-426) does interpret *kephale* as referring to "authority over". Grudem's (2006:425-26) arguments are summarized in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Meanings of *Kephale* (Grudem 2006:425-426):

Evidence that <i>Kephale</i> can mean “source”	Evidence that <i>Kephale</i> can mean “Authority over”
<p>-Articles and commentaries base their arguments entirely on Herodotus 4:91 and Orphic fragments, which are 400 years before the New Testament.</p> <p>-In Herodotus 4:91, <i>kephale</i> can refer to end points (sources) of a river but elsewhere, the mouth of a river. There is no convincing evidence that “source” is the required sense here.</p> <p>-Though Orphic Fragments 21a calls Zeus the “head” of all things, the context makes it impossible to tell whether it means “first one, beginning” or “source”.</p> <p>-No convincing examples from searches of 2336 examples of <i>kephale</i> from a wide range of ancient Greek literature where <i>kephale</i> meant “source”</p>	<p>-Major Lexicons specialising in the NT period give this meaning.</p> <p>-Searches of 2336 example turned up 49 texts where <i>kephale</i> had the meaning to a person of high rank, making it an acceptable and understandable sense of <i>kephale</i> at the time of the NT</p> <p>-The meaning “authority over” best suits many NT contexts.</p>

Grudem’s interpretation of *kephale* as relating to authority and to a person of high rank, does not fit well with the context of marriage, especially in the context of Ephesians 5:22-24. When this passage is read in its context, *kephale* should probably be understood as modelled to the headship of Christ with regard to the church. Van der Walt (1998:33) argues as follows:

In the sense of fountain, source, genesis or growth point it fits beautifully with marriage. Christ as the head should also indicate what a male’s headship should mean. And whenever Christ in Scripture offers males an example to follow, it is not strength, authority or dominance, but his humility, self-denial and service. In this regard Christ’s headship (in relevant texts in Corinthians,

Ephesians and Colossians) always means source of life, growth and service.

As head, the husband is to show love to his wife just as Christ has shown love to his church. This characteristic does not undermine the husband's authority but it is actually fulfilling his mandate as given by God. Gundry (1977:70) puts it as follows: "The word *head* has been used to prove divine order of command in which the husband takes his direction from Christ and the wife from the husband". To consider the husband as being superior to the wife is to therefore assume that he cannot give leadership by love, following the example of Christ who gave up everything for the sake of the church. The husband having "authority over" the wife is tantamount to oppression. In consideration of the evidence and arguments regarding *kephale*, this study chooses for the explanation of *kephale* in Ephesians 5:22-24 as that of "source".

3.5 Summary

This chapter has shown that male headship and female submission as it is found in Ephesians 5 is sometimes misunderstood among Christians. The concept of "headship" in Ephesians has been misused to oppress women especially in marriage. "Headship" does not imply "power over" or "unquestionable authority". It does not imply domination or force. At the same time, submission does not have to be the "dirty" word it has been made out to be. Submission is not only a command given to women but to both genders who are to submit to *each other*. No call is given upon one gender to force the other into submission or obedience. This kind of force seems to be what is implied in the present-day emphasis in teachings about headship and submission. Christian practitioners should therefore not only place the emphasis on women with regard to submission, but also on the call to submit to one another. Emphasis should also be placed on the husband's role to love his wife just as Christ has loved the church. This is the message of the gospel, which is one of love and equal regard, not of discrimination or oppression. This chapter has identified the need that practitioners, both preachers and pastoral caregivers, interpret the Ephesians text in light of the full message of the gospel in order

not to contribute further to harm done to women with an appeal to Scripture, especially in marriage.

CHAPTER 4

EXPERIENCES AND INTERPRETATIONS OF MARRIED SHONA CHRISTIANS

4.1 Methodology

In this chapter, the empirical investigation with married Shona Christians will be presented. Firstly, the methodology will be explained, including the method of selection of the participants, and the gathering, processing and interpretation of data.

Male headship and female submission is a social phenomenon, which can be found in patriarchal societies and in patriarchal religious traditions. In order to fully understand this phenomenon as it manifests among married African Christian people, the study uses a qualitative approach because, as Leedy et al (2005:94-97) put it, “the qualitative approach is used to answer questions about the complex nature of the phenomena”. The purpose is that the investigator, a cultural “insider”, be even further immersed into the world of the participants in order to understand and describe their experiences from their standpoint (see Baloyi 2011:71). Swinton et al (2007:31) explain the process as follows: “The qualitative approach is a process of careful, rigorous inquiry into an aspect of social world”. The process therefore involves a deep and thorough investigation into ways in which human beings experience life in general, and the focus of this investigation, namely male headship and female submission, in particular. As opposed to the quantitative approach, which is experimental in nature (see Hair et al 2003:211), the qualitative approach uses words data in several of ways (see Braun et al 2013). The main objective is to discover *meaning* and develop an *understanding* of what male headship and female submission means to the participant in their culture and in their faith experience (see Leedy 1993:140; Hair et al 2003:212). The aim of this study is to develop and understanding and explain African Christians’ perceptions, attitudes and practices with reference to male headship and female submission in marriage. A qualitative approach is therefore appropriate.

Semi structured interviews were done with a sample of 15 married Christian Shona males and 15 married Christian Shona females living in Harare, Zimbabwe. These men and

women belong to a variety of mainline and Pentecostal churches across Harare. With regards to background, all participants in the sample group had their roots in their rural homes. 86% of the male participants had formal jobs in different sectors whereas 14% had informal jobs. In terms of age demographics, the male participants were between 31 and 70 whereas the female participants were between 18 and 65. The age demographics of the male participants were: 13% between 31 and 40; 67% between 41 and 50; 13% between 51 and 60; and 7% over 60. The age demographics for the female participants were: 33% between 18 and 30; 13% between 31 and 40; 20% between 41 and 50; 27% between 51 and 60; and another 7% over 60. The years in marriage, for the male participants were: 93% between 6 and 20; and 7% between 21 and 40. The female participants' number of years in marriage were: 66% between 1 and 20; 26% between 21 and 40; and 6% over 40.

The churches were selected through the random sampling method. The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe's online database was accessed and a list of twenty churches in the Harare area was drawn. Out of the list of twenty churches, ten were selected by means of random sampling. Both mainline and Pentecostal churches are represented in the study since each element in the population had "an equal and independent chance of selection in the sample" (Kumar 2005:169). This eliminated all personal preference or bias in choosing the churches for the population.

After the list of the churches had been compiled, the leaders of the churches were contacted and asked for permission to carry out the survey among the church members. Out of the ten churches six responded positively. The leaders of these six churches were asked to provide a list of ten married men and ten married women. The persons' contact details and profession were indicated. Participants were then selected by means of the purposive sampling method because this method involves "data cases (participants, texts) on the basis that they will be able to provide information data to analyse". Kumar (2005:207; cf Bernard 2002) puts it as follows: "The primary consideration in purposive sampling is your judgements as to who will provide the best information to achieve the objectives of your study".

Before the commencement of every interview session, the participants were asked to sign an informed consent letter (refer to Appendix 1) so as to ensure the protection of the

participant, the interviewer and the university (see Wisker 2008:86). The consent form also indicated the willingness of the participant to take part in the study. The participants were assured of the confidential treatment of their responses and that their names were not going to be used in anyway in the research report or publications flowing from the research report.

All the interviews were done on a one-on-one basis and lasted for about 25 to 35 minutes to ensure “consistency, which leads to trustworthiness of the study” (Bennett et.al 1994:36). Interview guidelines (refer to Appendix 2) were used. This provided the interviewer with a set of questions by means of which the participant was engaged and the narrative terrain was designated (see Holstein et al 1995:76; Monette et al 2005:178). Since some of the interviews were conducted in the Shona language, the interview guidelines were also available in Shona, the language of all the participants.

Interviewing, which involves personal contact between the interviewer and the participant (see Bless et al 2006:116) represents an appropriate way to understand the world from the subject’s point of view and unfold the meaning of their experiences (Kvale 1996:1; cf Kvale et al 2009:3). The aim was to “gain a detailed picture of a participant’s beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of” the topic of interest (Greef 2005:296; Baloyi 2011:78). The interviews were aimed at exploring and understanding the perceptions of African Christians regarding male headship and female submission in marriage. According to Greef (2005:296-297), one of the advantages of semi-structured interviews is that they give “the researcher and participant much more flexibility” than would be the case with structured interviews. In the course of the interview interesting avenues that emerged, were explored. This afforded the participant the opportunity “to give a fuller picture” (Greef 2005:296) and the interviewer to gain deeper insight into the phenomenon that was explored in the investigation.

In order to record as much data as possible in the easiest but most effective way during the interviews, electronic audio recording equipment was used (see Deem 2002:840). This method of capturing data was chosen because everything was recorded as is and it also enabled both the interviewer and interviewee to concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview (see Kvale et al 2009:179). After the interviews were completed, they were transcribed. The data was then coded thematically. In line with the

description of coding given by Braun et al (2013:206), the themes of power and leadership in the home and marriage, marital roles and gender, *lobola*, and culture, were drawn from identifying “aspects of the data that relate to [the] research questions”. The responses were put into tables that indicate the frequency of their occurrence.

4.2 Narratives on headship and submission

4.2.1 Introduction

This section presents, processes and discusses the major themes identified from the thirty interviews and brings that into dialogue with the existing literature. The general aim of this study is to explore, develop an understanding, describe and explain African Christians’ perceptions, attitudes and practices with regard to male headship and female submission in marriage. The focus is on Shona culture in Zimbabwe as an exemplar.

In the interviews the married Shona Christian men and women described their understanding of headship and submission in marriage. In line with the general aim of this study, which is to explore, develop an understanding, describe and explain African Christians’ perceptions, attitudes and practices with reference to male headship and female submission in marriage, the respondents were asked a number of questions using an interview guideline. Their responses are presented under the themes of power and leadership in the home and marriage, the role of culture, marital roles and gender, and the impact of *lobola* on perceptions of male headship and female submission. Since the study is qualitative in nature, the tables are not used to “measure” the responses, but to group them for processing. The main themes as they emerged from the narrative interviews will now be presented.

4.2.2 Power and leadership in the home and marriage

The responses to the theme of power and leadership in the home and marriage are summarized in table 4.1 below. The results show how power and leadership in the home and marriage influence perceptions of male headship and female submission in these

African Christian marriages. The responses are based on both biblical and cultural injunctions.

Table 4.1 Power and leadership in the home and marriage

Row #	Response	Male		Female	
		N	%	N	%
001	Men equipped by God to be leaders	15	100	15	100
002	Women cannot lead men	11	73	7	47
003	Sexes not equal in terms of capacity	8	53	2	13
004	Man equipped by culture to lead women	15	100	15	100
005	Men have unquestionable authority over women	13	87	6	40
006	Husband is the ultimate decision maker	13	87	6	40
007	Husband can force wife into submission	10	67	5	33.3
008	Wives must be under their husbands' authority	15	100	15	100

The participants' understanding of power and leadership in the home and marriage reveal that a majority of them adhere to a hierarchical view of power. This view is based on the assumption that the husband is the authority figure of the household with powers vested in him both by God and culture. As a result, the participants find men competent to give leadership in the home whereas women are called to be submissive to their husbands. This high view of men and low view of women was particularly reflected in one female participant's assertion: "*Isu vakadzi hatizivi zvatinoita panyaya dzekutungamira. Varume bedzi ndivo vakanzi naMwari vatungamirire*" (Us women, we do not know what to do when it comes to leadership. Men are the ones chosen by God to leadership roles). The majority of the women interviewed had this perception even though some of them are leaders in the work place. This result concurs with Kambarami's (2006:2) observation that patriarchal practices "shape and perpetuate gender inequality and strip women of any form of control". With regard to this theme the responses made it clear that patriarchy

in both culture and the Bible were a major influence on the perception of gender roles in marriage.

The perception that males are the only ones capable to lead, indicated by the participants, was also found by Chabaya et al (2009) in their study to be a common phenomenon among the Shona people in Zimbabwe. Their study focused on the persistence of gender inequality in the employment sector. The study of Chabaya et al (2009) has shown that the perception that males are the only ones capable and called to lead is not only a male one. The women (African women in this case) demeaned themselves when it came to leadership. A remark by one of the interviewees in that study illustrates this (Chabaya et al 2009:241):

Social background has influences — women have multiple roles — e.g. wife, mother, worker, etcetera. We grew up in families where women were not leaders. So this affects us. We feel we should be led. Women are naturally not bold. Women feel inferior naturally and believe that men should be leaders.

The focus of the study by Chabaya et al was on why women in Zimbabwe did not aspire to leadership positions in schools. Their study illustrates the extent of the consequences of symbolic interaction for human behaviour (see Berger 1967). Symbolic interaction theory explains how the individual self is formed through the symbolic value system of society (see Annells 2012:380). It describes people as social actors living both in the natural and the symbolic environment and how the symbolic world influences their thought and behaviour. As such, "...although gender socialization in a patriarchal society creates discrimination between men and women, it takes place in such a way that both men and women accept it without force" (Aksan *et al* 2009:902). Male headship and female submission, and what men and women do in light of the same is greatly influenced by gender socialization. Consequently, both males and females accept the phenomenon without a full realization of these influences. The result is that they conclude that it is a mandate from culture and the Bible for males to be the "head" and females to take assume a submissive role.

Regarding *power and leadership in the home* the general view of the respondents was that the sexes are not equal. The men held strong views about the value and roles of women. Some were adamant that females are of lower value than males. The majority of these men referred to the Bible to substantiate their claim and regard a woman as *weaker* than a man. One male categorically stated, “*mukadzi aripasi pemurume. Murume musoro, saka sezvo musoro uripamusoro penhengo dzese, mukadzi aripasi*” (the wife is *under* the husband. Just as the head is the main thing on the body and above all other parts, so is the husband above his wife). The implication is that a woman should not overrule her husband’s authority or orders. She has to submit to him in all matters, for the husband is “the head of the wife”. Not to do so, is to go against cultural norms and values. According to Chabaya et al (2009:241) such perceptions about the inequality of the sexes hinder women in a number of ways. In the work place, for instance, women do not see themselves are worthy of promotion because they themselves believe that they are and indeed should be “culturally lower” than men. As a result, men take advantage of, exploit and dominate women. According to Wasike et al (2000), such attitudes cause men to assume a false sense of superiority and expect of their wives “to obey the Bible even out of context”. Mungwini (2008:205) calls it *social control* and explains its dynamics as follows: “Through both formal and informal means, such as jokes, social ridicule and insinuations, women are constantly reminded of what society expects of them”. This does not only function to constantly remind women of “their position”, but also constantly reminds men of their “superiority” to women.

For Christian believers, the issue of *power* invariably has to do with how biblical passages that reflect the status of men and women have been interpreted through the ages. According to the complementarian view, God created men and women to be different and to fulfil different roles (see Strauch 1999:7; Piper 2006:52; Piper et al 2006:60-92). Equality, in this view, means that both “man and woman bear God’s image equally” (Ortlund 2006:95). The *exclusion* that is the consequences of difference, is what led to the emergence of feminist theory as females sought to define themselves for themselves and improve their position in society (see Fineman 1994:349; Donovan 2001). Christian feminists who advocate equal opportunities of men and women in church and society, “consider the equal-yet-different doctrine taught by complementarians to be a contradiction in terms” (Strauch 1999:8). The feminist argument is that, if men and women are equal, they should have equal opportunities in society and in the home. Females

should not be seen as inferior to males. The biblical text that is often cited in this regard is especially Galatians 3:28, which in the New International Version of the Bible reads, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”. Osburn’s (2002:1) analysis of this passage is that it “speaks specifically to people’s status *in Christ* in a book that is focused on Jew/Gentile conflict where the Jews claimed that Gentiles weren’t saved. Being in Christ does not mandate doing away with cultural categories of people”. Osburn seems to be arguing that the Bible does not advocate overthrowing the cultural norms, but working within them. The problem is, however, that some cultural norms do not reflect the love but are oppressive and abusive (see Hindin (2003:502). This was clearly reflected in the responses to some of the interview questions. Culture should be evaluated in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ and, where culture is at odds with the gospel, its attitudes and practices should be challenged.

The *headship of the man* in the African Christian marriages is taken for granted by the respondents, both male and female. The male respondents generally believe that they have unquestioned and unquestionable authority over the wife. The majority of both male and female participants interviewed, regard the husband as the ultimate decision maker. Some female respondents who are employed whereas their husbands are not, did complain that the husbands make financial decisions regarding the money that the women bring to the household that go against the women’s wishes. According to Rutoro (2012:164), in Shona culture, “decision making is an exclusively male prerogative and women are merely the followers or implementers of the decisions made taken by men”. Therefore, a husband, rather than consulting the wife, would consult other men in making decisions that even have lasting consequences for his family (Rutoro 2012:164). The employed female respondents felt that this lack of inclusion and consultation with regard to decision making, was in effect abused and that they were demeaned by their husbands. They do not, however, know how to deal with this situation since the patriarchal system prevalent in their culture emphasizes that the man is the head of the family and they are also “taught by the church” to give all they earn to their husbands. The women find it oppressive that they are not allowed to make their own financial decisions. According to Falola and Amponsah (2012:67) religion could have the power to promote equality between sexes, but in practice “it has been a source of subordination and oppression”, especially towards women in marriage. Osburn’s idea above that the

Bible supports cultural norms, is therefore a cause of concern. Culture cannot simply be taken at face value. Cultural norms should be examined carefully and, deeply rooted views that lead to oppression and abuse in practice should be exposed and challenged. Religion and interpretations of Scripture should not be hand-maidens of culture, but a guiding light for culture. Its core task is to promote justice for all people, emphasise the equal value of all of God's creation, and above all proclaim love.

In response to questions regarding *male authority*, one female participant recounted how she was beaten by her Christian husband who did not see anything wrong with doing so. He beat her because she had disobeyed him. For this woman, such harsh treatment of a woman can be justified when the wife has “strayed” and “disobeyed” the husband. A minority of the female participants and a majority of the male participants find it acceptable that males use violence to force women to submit to them. In African cultures, it is generally accepted that men are justified in beating their wives if the situation warrants it (see Holleman 1952:277; cf Baloyi 2013:1). Christine Kalamwina, director of Gender in Development in Zambia is quoted by Fidgen (2009:1) saying: “The majority of women enjoy beating, because they are made to believe it is part of our [African] tradition”. Men often say that beating a wife is a sign of love. In a study with Zambian males (Fidgen 2009:1), one respondent put it as follows:

That's how you grow up in Africa ... To be a man, you need to discipline a woman, give her a slap or two. You know, in our [African] culture, it's [acceptable] because that's how we feel we love our women.

Hindin (2003:502) points to the consequences of such a perspective, namely that domestic violence is “supported or reinforced by gender norms and values that put females in a subordinate position to males”. Such cultural gender norms then continue to foster asymmetrical relationships in marriage. Though for Michel Foucault (1998: 63) power should not necessarily be seen as domination or coercion, because it is simply pervasive, it is everywhere and comes from everywhere, with respect to the relations between the sexes, there is overwhelming evidence, particularly in Africa, that females are continually dominated by males who, according to cultural norms, have power over them. For Foucault (1991:194) power is something that “produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth”. Its function is to be a source of social discipline

and conformity, to set rules and norms throughout society and also within individuals. Power in sense becomes negative when it results in the oppression of one by another. In the context of African marriage, this study has shown how power is often exercised as coercion, which is then interpreted as positive on cultural grounds, and also on religious grounds. It is seen as a man's God-given responsibility to direct, guide and help others behave in ways that God intended them to. The way in which Scripture is interpreted supports these beliefs and undergirds the social consensus, which is a cultural matter. It plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions regarding male-female relations. According to structural consensus theory (see Jones *et al* 2011:6), "human beings learn the kinds of behaviour expected of them in societal settings in which they find themselves". Social structures therefore define a people to a large extent and determine their attitudes and behaviours towards one another (Malina 1993:24). Of these two major influences, religion and culture, this study has shown that cultural influences play the more vital role and that cultural mores are justified by Scripture. Beliefs with regard to power and leadership are mainly formed by social interaction. African Christians adhere to what is regarded as socially acceptable and find confirmation in the Bible. Generally, they do not read Scripture critically and do not arrive at an independent standpoint regarding biblical interpretation.

4.2.3 The role of culture

In table 4.2 below, the study shows how cultural perceptions influence beliefs regarding male headship and female submission in marriage. In Chapter 2 African culture was highlighted in order to provide a general background. This section focuses on the participants' actual experiences of male headship and female submission in light of their specific culture.

Table 4.2 The role of culture

Row #	Response	Male		Female	
		N	%	N	%
001	Culture first, Bible second	10	67	12	80

002	Cultural and biblical headship and submission	13	87	14	93
003	Men and women positions are different	15	100	14	93
004	Gender equality causes females not to submit to their husbands	13	87	15	95
005	Wives must submit to their husbands	14	93	13	87
006	Headship and submission not adequately taught about in church	13	87	12	80

The study has shown that the participants' perceptions of male headship and female submission in marriage are largely influenced by their African culture. The majority stated that male headship and female submission had already been practiced among the African people long before the Bible was brought to Africa. For them, the Bible "came" to strengthen a practice already prevalent in African cultures. As a result, the majority of both male and female participants see culture as primary. They interpret the Bible as not in oppose to culture with regard to male headship and female submission in marriage, but that both address the issue in a similar way. Bourdillon (1993:23) has already observed this in 1993: "In spite of the influence of western civilisation or Christianity the African customs tend to dominate over and above religion or the law".

African cultures in general make a clear distinction between the position and role of men and women in the home and society. The views of the majority of the participants underscore that there is a clear distinction between the position of a male and a female person in both society and the home. These views are believed not only to come from the culture but also from Scripture that is seen to clearly demarcate the status of men over against that of women.

A number of participants did indicate that they found some cultural practices to be not right and that these should be supplanted by biblical principles. However, African cultural norms with regard to family makes it difficult for them to do so. They then succumb to the dictates of family and relatives, whether these are Christian believers or not. This shows how practice, also with regard to the power relationship of male headship and female submission, is often dictated by the extended family. The extended family is likely to

intervene when the wife does not submit adequately to her husband or perform tasks that are not deemed befitting for a woman. One male participant stated that, as much as he might want his wife to be on an equal level with him, it is a challenge when he is among his family. He is afraid that his family will respond with: “*mwana wedu akadyiswa mupfuhwira. Dai tambofamba naye arutsiswe*” (our daughter in-law must have given our son some deadly love potions and therefore we should visit a witch-doctor to perform an exorcism). When such things are said, it is an embarrassment to the family, which can lead to tension between the man’s family and his wife. This can culminate in divorce if not dealt with wisely by the couple. In African cultures, gender equality is largely seen as a threat to family order. The majority of the male and female participants found that, to advocate equality in marriage, would destabilize the marriage. Ayanga (2012:85) points out that discussions about gender are often not well received because both men and women find that such ideas go against God’s given mandate for men to lead and women to be submissive. As a result, patriarchy thrives also in African Christian communities as “the way things are, or even the way God wants things to be” (Visser 2012:15-16). Those who strive for equality in the home are castigated from both sides, that of culture and that of the Christian religion.

The strong cultural influence on the views of Christian believers is confirmed in that those participants who would have wanted hear an alternative and liberating message from the Bible point out that there is a lack of serious and deliberate biblical teaching on these matters. Participants indicate that the issue of male headship and female submission in marriage is not adequately addressed in church. These and other marital issues are often a concern of women only. In most churches from which the participants come, there are women’s league groups (referred to as *Ruwadzano* or *China Chemadzimai*) that meet regularly to encourage one another and to discuss matters of concern to the women, including marital issues. Among themselves they feel free to discuss anything, but outside of their group they are bound by their churches’ doctrines, which more often than not, emphasize a submissive role for women. Since men do not attend these meetings, they do not participate in discussions of this kind. Most of the male participants regard these women’s meetings with suspicion, since they fear that these meetings could serve to instigate women against their husbands. One male respondent assumes that such meetings teach women to be too vocal and not to obey their husbands. As a result, he prohibits his wife from attending these gatherings. Should she continue attending these

church meetings, he fears that she would no longer respect and submit to him as the authority figure of the household. He therefore uses his power to protect his own power and to keep his wife from participating in something that could benefit her. This could be interpreted as the suppression of one person by another and one forcing the other into submission. Though power serves as a source of social discipline and contributes to conformity to set rules and norms throughout society and also within individuals (Foucault 1991), when power is used to dominate it does not fulfil a positive social function, but amounts to injustice and an affront to human dignity. This study has shown how African men tend to use power to control and dominate their wives.

Though the male respondents generally regarded the women's meetings in a negative light, the female respondents indicated that the meetings fulfil the positive function of addressing Christian women's challenges and concerns. In these meetings, the women have the opportunity to openly discuss what they face at home, especially regarding male dominance. Womanist theory, which focuses on black women's concerns, was developed by African-American women and other women of colour across the globe. Womanist perspectives expanded on feminist theories, which were seen to represent but a limited Western worldview. Womanist theory gives a voice to black women. It is also referred to as "black feminism," (see Hill 1996; Carr et al 1996:14) which according to Omolade (1994: xx) is concerned with the struggles against sexism and racism in order to achieve equity and liberty also for black women.

Pastoral care givers should take the insights of feminism and womanism into account if they are to make a positive contribution to women's lives, especially in situations of oppression and violence. This study engaged with the women themselves in order to hear their first-hand accounts of their experiences and how they regard the role of the support of other women as, for instance, in women's church meetings. One female respondent who is an elder in the church and a marriage counsellor finds that, though the women's meetings are important, Christian women should adhere to cultural mores and relate to their husbands "in an acceptable manner". According to her, young women who come to these meetings or who come for marital counselling should be urged to remain true to their culture and not give way to modern-day trends with regard to gender, if they are to have long-lasting marriages. She believes that, though Christian believers are called to obey Scripture, the Shona cultural idea of male headship and female

submission is central and should be adhered to. She argues that the Bible does not object to male headship and female submission, but rather supports the idea. This again supports the tendency that has been observed all along in this study that culture sets the tone, whereas religion is invoked as support for cultural mores.

The respondents have made it clear that for Shona Christian women not to submit to their husbands, would have repercussions both in terms of culture and religion. Submission to the husband entails that the wife should meet the needs of the husband and adhere to what he says without fail and at all times. Male respondents were asked to identify the areas in which they would want their wives to submit to them. The main issue for them was that sex would not ever be denied them. Furthermore, in cooking their meals and taking care of the children would be ways in which wives show their submission. The men linked their authority and these duties they expected the wife to perform to the fact that they had had to pay lobola in order to get the wife.

African societies are generally patriarchal. In such a social structure men are believed by all to be superior to women and have authority and control over women. In a patriarchal society, the political system is ruled by men and women are considered to have inferior social and political status (Kottak 2013:411). Most of the male respondents in this study stated that, if their wives failed to submit, they would teach them submission from Scripture. One respondent stated that, should his wife not submit to him, he would rather leave her and find a more obedient and submissive woman to be his wife. This indicates how vulnerable women are in the patriarchal system of African cultures. They have been rendered voiceless and powerless and relegated to margins of the marital relationship. They live in daily fear of punishment, retribution or divorce, which could happen at any time. This amounts to coercion. They are under constant pressure to submit to their husbands totally and cater to his every whim.

4.2.4 Marital roles and gender

The study had found that the conception of marital roles and gender among the Shona Christians are directly related to the way in which sexual relations in marriage are conducted. The response to questions surrounding gender roles and gender are summarized below in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Marital roles and gender

Row #	Response	Male		Female	
		N	%	N	%
001	Males are sole providers	14	93	13	87
002	Household chores are for females	13	87	14	93
003	A woman can not ask her husband to cook or do any other household chores	13	87	14	93
004	Childhood views about roles have not changed	9	60	11	73
005	Roles for males only and for females only	13	87	14	93
006	Wives are helpers to their husbands	15	100	15	100
007	Currently enjoy my role in marriage	14	93	13	87

Marital roles are perceived by the respondents in general to be defined both culturally and biblically. The male is seen as the leader who alone sets the guidelines for the running of the household. The male is also seen as the sole provider, which entitles him to full control of the finances. One male respondent had a somewhat different perspective: "As the provider, I do not permit my wife to use her money for household uses. She can do whatever she wants with it because I am mandated by God to provide for the family". The general view is that taking care of the family and the household is the husband's responsibility. Wives should only receive money from their working husbands, and with that take care of the home. This kind of arrangement is interpreted by Falola and Amponsah (2012:59-60) as a strategy by men to achieve control over their wives. Some husbands feel insecure and threatened if their wives have their own money and also use it to contribute to household expenses. This is a common occurrence among the African societies. The study of Kambarami (2006) indicated how entrenched this way of thinking is. It showed that women who no longer had a husband, did not think to go and earn some money for themselves, but rather looked to the government to support them, since they did not have a man to support them. The women had been confined to the home and were not equipped to take care for themselves and their families. According to Peterson et al (1999:35), this kind thinking is difficult to change because it is accepted by both males and females as the way things are. It has been socially constructed. Because

of the mindset males and females “are equally constrained by cultural rules” (Jones et al 2011:7) and fail to see beyond the boundaries set by their culture to the detriment of their own lives and future.

While men are seen as providers, the main role of the women is designated as that of a “helper”. This term is derived from the creation story where it is said that God created Eve as a suitable *helper* for Adam. However, culturally the idea of the woman as a helper has been limited to the home. The role of the woman is that of “helping” her husband with the household of which he is the head. One elderly female respondent puts it as follows: “My role as a woman is to cook for my husband and family. I also make sure I do laundry and make sure his clothes are ironed. I give him water for bathing and just make sure he has everything he needs”. This woman and her husband live in a town house fitted with amenities such as geysers. The husband could quite easily find his own way with regard to something such as bathing. In this way of thinking, a woman should not ask the husband to do any household chores. The husband is free to volunteer should he wish to do so. Some respondents, however, did not agree with this. They argued that, if both husband and wife are working, there ought to be an equal distribution of the household chores. A female participant found that her husband lacked consideration for her because, when they get home from work, she has to do all the work while he watches television or reads the newspaper. This husband who benefits from her income but leaves all the housework to the wife, still expects sex on demand and wants her to be submissive. Though Falola and Amponsah (2012:58) point out that in urban African families, “African women are no longer the face of a stereotypical *housewife* who is only good for domestic duties”, the majority of working married women still have to do most if not all of the household chores. Doing household chores is one way in which women are perceived to show respect and submission to their husbands.

The respondents were questioned as to how they learnt about gender roles as children. The majority of both males and females responded that they learnt their roles through observation and also from the teachings of their parents and other family members. One male respondent stated that he learnt from an early age that the man was the provider. He was the only boy in a family of six. His parents gave him a better education than his sisters because, as a man, he would have to provide for his family. His sisters were not given an education because they would eventually get married and be provided for by

their husbands. The majority of the female participants still adhere to some aspects of their childhood socialization. The teaching that men are the head of the household and the provider is so ingrained that see their employment only as a necessity due to economic hardship and not as something that they would want to do for themselves and their own fulfilment or development as a person. They would rather prefer to stay at home raising the children and taking care of the household. They explain that their views are based on the Bible that calls them to help their husbands and not to be on an equal or competitive level with them. They interpret the biblical idea of “helping” the husband as being at home with the children and doing household chores.

With regard to the idea of the man as the provider, some male respondents justified their control over women as being due to the fact they work and earn an income, whereas their wives stay at home and do not contribute financially. Some felt that they should stay “ahead of” their wife with regard to academic and career development for fear of “being ruled by the wife” should she enjoy greater success than he did. The men did not comment on what their role would be if the wife should be the only one to work and support the family. Among the female participants, three women who had formal work in the corporate world recounted that when their husbands became unemployed that caused conflict in their marriage. The fact that the woman was employed and the man not, caused the husband to feel insecure in his role as head of the household and provider. One of the women who at that point was the only breadwinner attempted to save her marriage by resigning her employment and staying at home. It is clear that the male role and male power are threatened when they lose the position of sole provider. Whether men work or not, the responses indicate that, in one way or the other, they coerce their wives into submission.

From the discussion on gender roles, one aspect that emerged was the idea that discussions on gender cause confusion and are not good for marriages. Both the male and female respondents expressed the fear that marriages would be destabilized if ideas of gender equality were put into practice. In a patriarchal context such ideas would lead to males losing their control and authority and women gaining control and authority (Harawa-Katumbi 2012:106). Due to socialization such negative perceptions are held by both males and females and also in Christian circles. Women who advocate gender equality are often seen as rebels “who have lost direction and who want to destroy the

God-given mandate to be submissive” to their husbands (Ayanga 2012:85). This negative view of gender equality has a detrimental effect not only on women's human dignity but also on male-female relations.

The concepts of “sex” and “gender” are distinguished in scholarship. According to Lee (2005: vii) biological sex is about what it is to be female or male. Gender, on the other hand, “refers to the division of people into masculine and feminine with accompanying socially constructed roles, rules of behaviour, activities and attributes ... Gender is not physiologically determined but socially constructed” (Harawa-Katumbi 2012:105). Kimmel (2004:1) points out the subtle consequences of such a social construction of gender:

Gender is not simply a system of classification, by which biological males and biological females are sorted, separated and socialised into equivalent sex roles. Gender also expresses the universal inequality between women and men. When we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power, and inequality, not simply difference.

Vijfhuizen (2002:4) concurs and states that one should look beyond gender differences to assess why relations between men and women are usually asymmetrical. That has something to do with hierarchy and power. At the same time, one cannot talk about hierarchy and power without referring to gender. In order to arrive at an understanding of a symmetrical power relationship in marriage, the dynamics of *gender* should be understood.

4.2.5 Lobola

Lobola, a major cultural element in male-female relations in marriage, is addressed in this section specifically to ascertain its influence on the issue of headship and submission in marriage. Responses to the issue of *lobola* are summarized in table 4.4 below. Responses have shown that the payment or non-payment of *lobola* greatly influences the concept of male headship and female submission in marriage among Shona (and African in general) Christians.

Table 4.4 Lobola

Row #	Response	Male		Female	
		N	%	N	%
001	Marriage is illegitimate without lobola	10	67	14	93
002	Lobola makes females valued	15	100	15	100
003	Man who pays lobola is responsible	15	100	15	100
004	Would behave differently if had not paid lobola or if lobola had not been paid	15	100	15	100
005	Without lobola, a woman cannot fully submit to her husband	13	87	10	67
006	Without lobola, a male cannot fully assume headship role over his wife	12	80	10	67
007	Lobola equals commitment in marriage	7	47	5	33
008	Lobola binds females even into abusive marriages	3	20	10	67
009	Lobola results in females being forced into submission	3	20	6	40
010	Lobola must not be abolished	15	100	9	60

The customary practice of *lobola* plays a crucial role with regard to how male and female participants relate to their spouses in marriage. All the male interviewees stated they had paid *lobola* “to get the wife”. On the other hand, all the female interviewees stated that their husbands had paid *lobola* in order “to marry them”. Male and female respondents agree that a marriage is only legitimate where *lobola* has been paid. Chireshe and Chireshe (2010:3) describe *lobola* “is a traditional custom that has endured forever”. In other words, it is a practice that has been practiced since time immemorial. It is the very essence of any African marriage. Whether Christian or non-Christian an African marriage without the payment of *lobola* is generally considered to be invalid. Without *lobola*, the couple is only cohabiting (see Ngundu 2010; Chireshe and Chireshe 2010: 215; Possel, Rudwick and Casale 2011:108).

A minority of both male and female respondents find that *lobola*, in a way, promotes lawlessness in the sense that those who cannot afford it end up cohabiting. However, the majority of the respondents describe it in positive terms, such as that the payment of *lobola* is a sign that a woman is valued in marriage. This is also the opinion of Gelfand (1999:177; cf Chigwedere 1982; Owomoyela 2002:94; Townshend 2008:34) who articulates it as follows: “I personally would look on the payment of bride wealth as having the effect of giving the woman a value in the eyes of all especially the man. Here is a person who has value; someone who cannot just be taken”. This generally positive view seems to be the dominant idea regarding *lobola*. However, how both male and female respondents describe the consequences if no *lobola* had been paid, is significant. Without *lobola* it would be difficult for a woman to fully *submit* to her husband and the husband would not be able to fully assume his *headship role* in the home, since he would not have the *authority* to do so. One male respondent asserted that, he had not paid *lobola*, he would treat his wife with great care because he would be afraid that she would leave him. The flip-side is then self-evident: caution and respectful behaviour would not be necessary if he had “paid for her”. Given such a mind-set, the potential for abuse is significant.

Some scholars (see Ndulo 2011:94) state plainly that *lobola* has become an instrument of male dominance and exploitation. Though it plays a pivotal role in African marriage, *lobola* perpetuates gender inequality. Women can easily be mistreated because they were *paid* for, especially if their family does not have the means to return the *lobola* in the event of divorce (Chabata 2012:13). The woman is then trapped in an abusive marriage. Stewart et al (1990:171-172) term paying *lobola* for a bride as “systematic evil,” which fosters inequality between males and females. The results of this investigation show that male-female relations are greatly affected by the payment or non-payment of *lobola*. According to Gelfand (1973:30), the payment of *lobola* gives the husband too much power over his wife, which can easily result in abuse. Gustafsson et al (2006:5) equate the payment of *lobola* to the husband “buying his wife”. It is therefore clear that the payment or non-payment of *lobola* remains a contentious issue, which contributes to people’s perceptions of male headship and female submission.

4.3 Summary

In this chapter, the methodology of the empirical part of the investigation was explained, namely the selection of respondents, the gathering of data, the processing and the interpretation of data. Four themes were identified: power and leadership in the home and marriage, the role of culture, marital roles and gender, and the impact of *lobola* on perceptions of male headship and female submission.

The investigation of power and leadership in the home and marriage exposed the patriarchal nature of both African and biblical societies where leadership is automatically attributed to men and women are relegated to a subordinate position. Men are seen as capable of giving leadership, whereas women are deemed incapable. Men are believed to be mandated by God to be the heads of the wife and family. Culture too has a significant influence on male female relations in marriage.

Headship and submission, as both cultural and biblical issues, pose a challenge to African Christians who struggle to ascertain what is cultural and biblically conducive to the well-being of both sexes. The custom of paying *lobola* has been shown to greatly influence perceptions and practices with regard to headship and submission in marriage. As a traditional custom cherished among the African people, *lobola* continues to be “the only way” to legitimize marriage. As a result, African Christians feel it defines them and gives legitimacy to their marriage, though attitudes with regard to *lobola* have also been seen to lead to abuse in marriage. *Lobola* affects the *power relations* in marriage. Men who have not paid *lobola* feel powerless to control their wives. Women for whom *lobola* has not been paid, often feel that they cannot be fully committed to their marriage and that their husbands do not love them sufficiently. As a result, they live in uncertainty, fearing that they can be sent back to their home any time, or that in the event of his death, they will walk away without anything.

It falls to pastoral care-givers to educate the members of their churches, not only from a cultural viewpoint but also from a biblical perspective rooted in the gospel message of Jesus Christ, on the consequences of *lobola* and other cultural aspects for justice, human

dignity and the well-being of all of God's people. The gospel message of love should shed light on culture and cultural practices.

CHAPTER 5

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES ON MALE HEADSHIP AND FEMALE SUBMISSION IN MARRIAGE

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter African Christian attitudes and practices regarding male headship and female submission are interpreted to provide insights for pastoral care with married African Christian believers in their context, which will invariably contain some traditional cultural influence and specific interpretations of the Bible. The study has demonstrated how African traditional culture influences gender understandings, attitudes, as well as the position and roles of males and females in marriage. This has also had an effect on African Christians and their marriages. Placed in a social constructionist framework, the understandings and practices of headship and submission among the African Christians were interpreted in this study as the product of social processes whereby people construct their realities as they live (Freedman and Combs 1996:23). The contribution of this study focuses on the pastoral imperative that, if such constructions are harmful to people on the one hand and go against the gospel message on the other hand, these social discourses should be deconstructed. Traditional cultural understandings and practices with regard to marriage are constantly in a process of change and adjustment and cannot be seen as absolutes (see Worthington 1989:17; Jenson 2002:196-199; Morgan 2000:9). The gospel message speaks anew in every context and in every era. The language of previous eras is not always relevant in a subsequent time. Therefore, the core content of the gospel message has to be conveyed in fresh ways and in appropriate language. The “traditional way” or “traditional interpretations” will not remain sufficient in perpetuity.

This study has demonstrated that traditional perspectives on marriage can lead to the oppression of women, especially those who, in this twenty first century, are in the labour market and also, or sometimes solely, provide for their families. Because “in both the European and the African context ... sexuality, gender and family are contested and highly problematic issues” (De Lange 2006:82), male-female relations should be considered within the scope of human rights. Both culture and the Bible call for a critical

approach rather than simply blind submission to the interpretations of “tradition”. Cultural and biblical criticism will scrutinize both traditions careful for whether they cause harm or are conducive to the well-being of people. Harmful structures, systems, attitudes, ideas and practices should be exposed and changed. According to Van der Berg and Pudule (2007:176) contemporary perspectives “... demand and challenge men to enter into an egalitarian type of marriage in which they will be partners”. Though the Bible stems from a patriarchal culture and many formulations in Scripture seem to undergird traditional ideas of the headship of males and the submission of female persons, the gospel of Jesus Christ emphasises respect for the value of all people. Such respect (loving your neighbour as yourself) precludes self-centred dominance, self-serving interests and the oppression of or violence against others.

If the Bible is taken seriously, both in terms of its cultural heritage and of the gospel message, biblical interpretation can become a complex exercise. Elisabeth Shüssler-Fiorenza (1983:13) explains the delicate balance specifically with regard to the Bible and women as follows: “Neither a total rejection nor a total acceptance of the Bible is called for. Instead, every biblical passage on women must be carefully analysed and evaluated for endocentric implications”. According to Townshend (2008:159) “the key to change in attitude of the church in the area of gender issues lies mainly in education and re-contextualizing of Bible passages from a fresh gender sensitive point of view in order to challenge and change” the current notions regarding headship and submission in marriage. This process requires teaching and encouraging Christians to read the Bible in the light of present-day scholarship and not simply to accept old ways of thinking that do not challenge, are no longer relevant and contribute to people being treated unjustly. This reading ought to be done with the objective of trying to understand and interpret human existence. It will be a gradual process, but eventually, as Van de Berg and Pudule (2007) emphasize, it will lead to counteracting “certain Christian beliefs and principles [that] are often incorrectly used to support ... patriarchal discourses”. This process will be met with challenges, especially in an African context with its specific cultural heritage. Louw (2004: 35) puts it as follows: “A *theologia Africana* is how to reckon with cultural issues as well as the uniqueness of Christian theology”. The point of departure of this study has been that any chosen approach should value human existence at all levels without discrimination. That is the message of the Bible: the message of love for all of humanity.

This love should manifest also and especially in the context of marriage and family, which are in their very essence supposed to be loving and nurturing relationships.

5.2 Marriage in the Bible

The focus of this study has been on male headship and female submission in Christian marriage, specifically in the context of African cultures. Since Christians are informed by the Bible, a brief exploration of marriage as portrayed by biblical texts with specific reference to the idea of male headship and female submission is necessary. The assumption of this study is that how marriage is perceived, affects understandings, attitudes and practices in general and how a couple deals with the issue of male headship and female submission in particular.

According to the Christian faith God created male and female to be together in a mutual relationship (Gen 2:24; Mk 10:6-8; Mt 19:4-6). Munroe (2006:49) calls this relationship “equal in personhood and authority”. According to the second creation story in Genesis 2:18-24, God made the woman from the man’s side. Some see this as a metaphor for mutuality. Others argue in support of women’s *inferiority*. Since God created the man first and the woman from and for the man, they are not equal. This, however, is reading too much into the “order” as though value depends on the order. Munroe (2006: 49) quotes a proverb in the Hebrew Talmud, which refutes the notion that a woman is inferior to man: “God did not create a woman from man’s head, that he should command her, nor from his feet, that she should be his slave, but rather from his side that she should be near his heart”. This proverb emphasises the relational aspect, which was not intended to be one of superiority and inferiority, but rather of companionship (Gen 2:18). Chapman (2005:17) applies this to the marital relationship as follows:

The supreme purpose of marriage is the union of two individuals at the deepest level and in all areas, which in turn brings the greatest possible sense of fulfilment to the couple and at the same time serves the best purposes of God for their lives.

To disadvantage one sex over against the other or perpetrate abuse as the extreme form of disadvantage does not constitute “fulfilment”, but goes against the relational intent of the creation of man and woman. According to Thatcher (1999:9), “the marriage relationship is an *eminently human love*, which brings together *the human and the divine*”. From a theological perspective, it can thus be said that marriage is a gift and sign of God’s grace, bearing the implication that those in a marital relationship should view and receive each other as a gift to each other. This rules out oppression and abuse as part of the relationship.

5.3 An egalitarian approach

African societies are patriarchal and so too are many sectors of the Christian faith community worldwide. In African societies in particular, men have more power than women and also have “power over” women. This cultural reality is carried over by some African Christians into marital relations, where it is further reinforced by the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of religion. As a result, it becomes a confusing matter for some African Christians to identify the predominant influences on their views of male headship and female submission in marriage. From both camps, that of religion and that of culture, come understandings and attitudes that define the sexes as radically different from each other. Difference then easily leads to a hierarchical relationship in which those higher up in the social hierarchy (men) have more value than those lower down in the hierarchy (women). An egalitarian approach would dispel the notion that men are the starting point and the yardstick to value and worthiness and would focus on women’s *humanity* rather than their difference. The result of such an approach will be that women can be seen as of equal value to men in their humanity (Bryson 2007:48).

In patriarchal societies men assert themselves as authority figures both in the household and in the community, whereas women are to be submissive everywhere and in everything. In this way patriarchal attitudes and practices perpetuate women oppression and disadvantage them in many ways. In a patriarchal context, women who fail to submit, even when treated harshly by their husbands, are branded as rebellious. In the case of Christian women, they are seen as “rebellious” also against the “household order

instituted by God” (Visser 2012:15-16). Munroe (2002:172) connects female submission with respect and points out the consequences for women who do not submit in marriage also in the church: “Wives who dare to strike back over harsh treatment are regarded as outcasts in the Church”.

In their attempt to observe the “biblical” idea of headship and submission, churches often choose for a cultural construct such as patriarchy and, in doing so, go against the gospel message of love and respect. Bryson (2007:35) explains that such an approach is untenable in this day and age because “equal rights for men and women is now part of the common sense of our society” (Bryson 2007:35). If the church is called to love, a continued endorsement of oppressive patriarchal behaviour constitutes a gross misunderstanding of Scripture. In taking a different approach than the patriarchal idea of male headship and female submission, churches can be true to their vocation and give hope to many millions of women around the globe who are being oppressed and violated in the name of the Bible and culture. In a message a previous Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, emphasised the enormity of this problem and set the agenda for the peoples of the world: “Eliminating gender discrimination and empowering women are among paramount challenges facing the world today” (in Moccia et al 2007:vi). Annan’s statement confirms the reality that in most societies around the globe women are disadvantaged, sometimes seriously so. Annan called for the participation of all members of society to support gender equality efforts.

Churches should be on the forefront of eliminating injustice and eradicating oppression. They should participate in advocating for gender equality and take the lead in devising an egalitarian approach to the relationship between men and women. This can be done when Christian believers realize that the same Bible, which is often used as a tool to justify control of men over women in the name of “biblical headship”, can be used to support equality of the sexes if the focus is on the Great Commandment and the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the gospel of love. The Bible has often been used to teach women to *submit* to the control of men irrespective of how they were treated (see Munroe 2002:172). This has led to both men and women having internalized harmful attitudes with regard to male headship and female submission in marriage, in the family and in fact in broader society. This is advocated as “biblical norms and values” (Visser 2012:15-16) and is used as justification for harmful social imbalances.

The same Bible can also be used as a tool to “unlearn” harmful attitudes and practices, thereby liberating females from oppression and liberating males from their role as oppressor. According to South African Old Testament scholar, Madipoane Masenya (1995:194), one way to read the Bible for the equal value of the sexes is to examine texts about women to counteract those texts that are used to oppress them. Masenya suggests that well-known texts be re-interpreted or forgotten texts be brought to the attention again. Schüssler-Fiorenza (1994: xxi) examines contradictions in the text and challenges the authority of such practices. Rosemary Ruether (1998: 46) gives guidelines for the evaluation of texts: “Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, to be appraised as not redemptive”. New ways of thinking about the biblical concepts of male headship and female submission are needed. Ephesians 5:21-33, for example, can be re-interpreted to form the basis for an egalitarian approach to marriage.

The study gave a brief overview of how Ephesians 5:22-24 has been interpreted and demonstrated how it was (and is) commonly used to endorse male headship and female submission in marriage. If it is taken literally, as often happens in the African context, it results in Christian believers finding support and justification for patriarchal cultural practices in Scripture. The Bible was written in a context of male domination. Patriarchy was the social system of both the Judaic and Greco-Roman societies in which the Bible originated. Among the Hebrew people, women in marriage deferred to their husbands in everything. The structure of authority inherent in the patriarchal model reflected in Ephesians cannot be said to be binding to modern marriage since it reflects a cultural structure from a distant time. Not all cultural values in the Bible are relevant today. Bible scholars, such as for example Turaki (2006:1436), should rather investigate the implications of ancient cultures for today, which can be detrimental, than uncritically impose those cultural elements onto present-day believers. Park (1987:124) questions the normativity of patriarchy as follows: “The patriarchal model [in Eph. 5], then, while relevant for those couples who choose it for themselves, is not necessarily normative for all couples. What is universal are the *Christocentric* principles of *love* and *respect*, which partners express through mutual submission to one another and Christ”. This approach clearly distinguishes those who are “in Christ” and those who are not. If one is in Christ, the expectation is that he or she would be motivated by love rather than ego or cultural status. In this case, the love of and for Christ permeates all human relations.

Some contemporary interpretations can be advantageous to both sexes. In conservative and traditional interpretations regarding headship and submission are sometimes overtly oppressive to women and sometimes subtle and hidden. Evangelicals, for example, do not emphasize male headship as authority, but rather as “watching out for the best interests of the family” (Moore 2006: 573). Bonnie Miller-McLemore (2003:240) explains it as follows:

Without a doubt, Christianity has taught and continues to teach male headship. In fact, it is impossible to worship in the vast majority of Christian congregates today, even in the more liberal churches, without endorsing it, however subtly or indirectly.

The Bible has and continues to be used to reinforce what this study regards as the socio-cultural oppression of women. Though the word “authority” occurs more than 100 times in the New Testament (see Baloyi 2008:7), it is only used twice in the context of marriage relationships, namely in 1 Corinthians 11:10 where it is expected of the woman to have a sign over her head to signify her husband’s authority and in 1 Corinthians 7:4 according to which men and women have mutual authority over each other in marriage.

In African cultures marriage is hierarchical. Authority is vested in the man. According to most Christians, the Bible endorses this kind of thinking. Arguments are largely based on the idea of male headship and female submission as described in Ephesians 5:21-24. African scholars such as Turaki (2006:1436), suggest that the biblical model presented in Ephesians 5:21-33 is applicable to all marriages including African marriages. This is reinforcing patriarchal structures and attitudes already present in the African context and leaves African Christian believers with the perception that it is “biblical” to dominate and oppress women. A closer look at Ephesians 5:21-33 shows, however, that a more balanced approach to power in the relationship between a man and a woman in marriage is attainable. The Christological-ecclesiological parallel to marriage given in this passage gives an indication of the attitude that should prevail in the way in which husband and wife relate, namely the attitude of Christ. The seemingly implication is that marriage, in God's design, ought to be a figure of the union of Christ and his church. Men, as husbands, are instructed to love their wives sacrificially. The call to sacrifice himself as Christ in no way gives a man the leeway to consider himself superior to a woman, but

rather encourages him to see the other as more important than himself (Palkovitz 1996:321). Ephesians 5:21-33 shows how members of the family are to relate to one another. Evangelical feminist, Virginia Mollenkott (2003:45-53), points out that both traditional and feminist readings of this biblical passage often fail to notice its emancipative elements. Mollenkott (2003:45-53) distinguishes three significant liberating principles of equality that characterize Ephesians' view to marriage:

- the mutual submission of marital partners (5:21);
- husbands' self-sacrificial love for their wives (5:25);
- the interdependence of marital partners just as the church as body of Christ is an interdependent union (5:23).

Though Ephesians maintains a social hierarchy, according to Shkul (2009:177), "it gives traditional social positions new meanings, so that values, roles and behaviours do not seem to derive from traditions or values of the corrupted society, but from Christ and the egalitarian ideology of the community". Male headship and female submission have their bearing in and influence from Christ. For Mouton (2003:72) Ephesians seeks to reorient both "Jews and the Gentiles, and men and women" by opening up a new way of looking at things and offering the possibility of new roles. This is achieved by the "liminal dynamics of identification, alienation and reorientation that view human existence in the light of the Christ-event" (Mouton 2003:78). From a Christological-ecclesiological perspective the husband is not called to rule and dominate the wife but just "as the Christ is not only the authority over but the source of gifts of love for the church, so the husband is not only the authority over but the source of gifts of love to the wife" (Heil 2007:242). Should such attitudes prevail, the equal value of women will not present a threat to men and oppressive patriarchal tendencies will be eliminated. This will concur with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

5.4 The *Magna Carta* of humanity

Feminist theology grapples with the Bible and Christian traditional teachings on women. This struggle has resulted in two camps with different interpretations as to what the authority of Scripture entails. Those who hold Scripture as authoritative strive for biblical

exegesis that is conducive to the value and well-being of both sexes. Their main aim is to show that God, through the Bible, has revealed God-self to humanity in ways that are not oppressive. Lancaster (2002: 4) states that for feminists, "... revelation takes place when God's Word is heard anew ... and when it is heard in a transforming and reforming way". The notion here is that an understanding of revelation is an ongoing process, and not just a once-off occurrence, reified in the Bible. As such, the Bible should have authority in the lives of believers in ways that are not oppressive as has been the case with many traditional interpretations and practices. Oppressive traditional views of Scripture ought not to be held as normative for this can hinder the Bible's ability to speak to both men and women and adequately address contemporary issues, especially regarding male-female relations.

Allowing the Bible to speak in this manner is on a par with the realization that "equal rights for men and women is now part of the common sense of our society" (Bryson 2007: 35). Churches that aim to serve the well-being of *all people*, should teach its members that both male and female are equally valuable in the eyes of God. Jewett (1975:142) calls Galatians 3:28 "the Magna Carta of humanity": "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ". For Parvey (1974:135), Galatians 3:28 is a "projection of a new version of the once segregated human family now united in Christ in the common promise and future of Christ's community". In light of Galatians 3:28, it would be a contradiction to assume that Ephesians 5:21-33 endorses a hierarchical household order that emphasises inequality between the sexes (see Newsom et al 2012: 578). Men and women are equally created by God and that implies that they are equal in their capabilities and authority. For Warunta and Kinoti (2000:130) women were "intended by God to be co-creators on earth in community and interdependence with other people. Women are called by God to be responsible persons, accountable to God for the stewardship of their giftedness and talents".

Teaching headship and submission from Ephesians 5:21-33 in such a way that it promotes gender discrimination or unequal treatment of the sexes is not in line with the message of the love that Jesus portrays in the gospel. According to Gundry (1977:70), the use of the word *head* indicated a "divine order of command in which the husband takes his direction from Christ and the wife from the husband". Such an interpretation

does not take into account the many instances in the Bible where God does deal directly with women. God is not obligated to go through the husband. Such a view could imply that men are more spiritual than women and that women are inferior to men. Heil (2007:240) emphasizes that the wife's submission in first century Mediterranean culture as mirrored by Ephesians 5 does not entail the eternal "inferiority" of women, since both men and women were created as equals. Difference should not undermine the fact that before God man and woman are equals and as such God can deal with individuals as God wishes. "The Magna Carta of humanity" is modelled by Jesus who did not discriminate between men and women but treated them with equal respect. The following characteristics of Jesus' interaction with women can be distinguished:

- Jesus wanted justice for all, also for women (John 8:2-11).
- Jesus welcomed women to his ministry, and did not consider them of less value than men (John 20:1-18). Women were also involved in ministry after the death of Jesus.
- Jesus promised the Holy Spirit on all flesh (John 14; Acts 1:14; Joel 2:28) and not just on men, implying that there is no separation between the sexes. Women are equally used by God, and God communicates directly with them. God takes women into God's service.

5.5 Headship and submission in African culture and an egalitarian view of marriage

In the African context, as in many other cultures, family is greatly valued. In African cultures, the father as the head of the family, is responsible for the overall well-being of the family. Though this sounds caring and responsible it this view does have the potential for abuse. This happens when a husband elevates himself to a *kingship* position – commanding respect and seeking to be served rather than serving his family. A brief comparison between the traditional African concept and an egalitarian view of marriage as illustrated in table 5.1 sheds more light on how understandings and attitudes of headship and submission shape the conception of "family".

Table 5.1 Traditional African views vs. the egalitarian conceptions of headship and submission (adapted from Baloyi 2007:175-176)

Traditional African View	Biblical (Gospel message) View
Headship is domination	Headship is servanthood leadership
Women submission	Mutual submission
Fear characterizes the relationship	Love characterizes the relationship
Husband/father solely in charge of the family or household	Both equally responsible
Man is the ultimate decision maker	Both agree on decisions
Women considered inferior to men	Men and women equal in the eyes of God
Wife abused/beaten	Respect of human beings
Women not protected	Both protect each other
Language that degrades and stereotypes women	Language of love for both sexes

Though family is valued and there is a profound respect for human life in the African culture, headship and submission are still understood and practiced in ways that tend to be oppressive to women. The central element in the table of comparison above is that the egalitarian perspective, as opposed to the traditional African perspective, calls for a husband to be a servant. Colijn (2004:74) cites Genesis 22:1-14, 26:23-25 and Exodus 12:3-11 to demonstrate that the husband was not just the head for the sake of having authority, but that “the father as head of the household was the priest for the household”. The relationship of the family with God as well as their spiritual growth are the focus. The Christian family ought to be a centre of worship and there should be love, which culminates into equal regard of each other (see Browning 2004:126-138). Love as equal regard means “willingly and actively striving for the good (the flourishing) of the other” (Witte et al 2007:7). This kind of attitude would eliminate the patriarchal tendency of the husband to dominate or abuse the wife (see Colijn 2004:79). It would result in a symmetrical sharing of power and seeking the good of the other. In seeking the good of the other, coercion or manipulation have no place (Anderson 2012:64). Also for married

African Christians loving one another above status or marital roles is the calling of the gospel.

5.6 Summary

The study has presented a pastoral perspective on the issue of male headship and female submission by demonstrating the need for the church to intentionally teach the values of the gospel message in order to address contemporary understandings and practices of the relationship between men and women, and even more so in marriage. Traditional African marital practices, though they are similar to patriarchal practices mirrored in Scripture, do not converge with the spirit of the gospel. The word of the God who is love, should be allowed to speak into the lives of men and women in order to transform their lives. God did not create humanity so that people should oppress one another. This is especially true of the context of marriage where women are often treated with disdain. Marriage, which is supposed to be about love should be an embodiment of the love of God who created men and women equally. Cultural practices that continue to strengthen inequality of the sexes should be examined in light of the gospel message and if they function contrary to that message, should be exposed as such. The faith community can emphasize the gospel of love and respect in the following ways:

- by intentionally teaching against the oppression of women in marriage by adopting a non-patriarchal approach to the relationship between men and women;
- by helping the body of believers to move from destructive cultural beliefs and practices that continue to place women “under men’s feet”; practices that were applicable to the distant past do not serve life in this postmodern world or the gospel message of love and respect.

The main goal of Christian believers is to live out the gospel message of love. Love does not abuse or oppress. Love always seeks the good of the other.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

Male headship and female submission in marriage, as both a cultural and a biblical issue, is a bone of contention not only in African traditional marriages but also in African Christian marriages. From both religious and African cultural perspectives, it is taught to and expected of a wife to be subordinate to their husband as the head of the household. This contributes to power imbalances that can lead to conflict in marital relations. The aim of this study was to describe, explain and develop an understanding African Christians' perceptions, attitudes and practices with regard to male headship and female submission in marriage. To achieve this aim, the study explored preconceptions and power relations in African Christian marriages, as well as how African Christians define the roles of males and females. This was done firstly through exploring existing literature on marriage, the sexes and Christian religion, and secondly through the narrative interviews, which provided data for investigating current perceptions practices regarding male headship and female submission in African Christian marriages. The interview participants were from the Zimbabwean Shona cultural group. As a Bantu group, the Shona people are in some ways representative of a broader African mind-set, views and practices, and in other ways exhibit distinct cultural features. Insights from existing literature and results of the empirical study were brought into dialogue with Christian Scripture, particularly the relevant passages from the Letter to the Ephesians in order to shed light on how headship and submission in marriage is perceived in the Christian circles and what alternative interpretations would be possible.

Findings correspond to some extent with the existing literature with mostly non-African focus. Literature in the fields of gender and feminist studies as well as feminist and womanist theology point to the extent of gender inequality. The differences in male and female behavioural patterns are traced back to cultural values and norms, which lead to specific perceptions of the place and value of women, which in turn leads to specific practices. The question was whether Scripture, which originated in and reflects patriarchal cultures contributed to the formation of these ideas. The study has shown that the formation of ideas with regard to gender can be attributed to culture rather than Scripture. For African Christians Scripture then serves as substantiation and justification

of patriarchal cultural views and practices. The study has found that culture influences the reading and application of Scripture, which in turn affects how the sexes view and treat each other. The following views (often of both males and females) from the interviews corroborate this:

- Leadership, both in the home and in the society is a male prerogative. This is because as "the head", males are seen as having been called and equipped by God to perform the leadership role. Women are on the other hand often considered as not capable to lead. As a result, males' positions in the society are considered superior to those of females.
- Due to gender differentiation, females are considered the weaker sex incapable of performing "manly" roles as prescribed by the society.
- As the head of the household, the husband is superior to the wife and his authority over his wife is unquestionable. The implication therefore is that the husband does not need to consult his wife in decision making even with regard to her income. His authority includes the right to discipline the wife just as he disciplines the children. Physical violence is used without compunction.
- Males and females have different status and roles in society and the church. They are not seen nor treated as "equals before God".
- Household chores are regarded as "women's work".

The study employed different theories to investigate the issue of male headship and female submission in African Christian marriages. For the investigation of power in society and power relations among individuals, the work of philosopher Michel Foucault was utilized. Though Foucault sees power not necessarily as domination or coercion, but rather as dispersed and pervasive, being everywhere and coming from everywhere, in this case the findings show that the power of males over females in African marriage, including Christian marriage is, more often than not, the power of domination and coercion. Therefore, violence and abuse are prevalent. This kind of systemically entrenched power imbalances can be termed "structural evil". Its effects are seen in the oppressive attitudes and behaviour towards women who are forced into submissive roles and denied the opportunity of personhood and to develop and grow as a person. These rights are generally limited to males. Foucault, in his analysis of power, sees the functions

of power among others as fulfilling society's need for discipline and control in order that people will conform to set rules and norms throughout society. African cultures, as all other cultures and societies have such set norms and rules. In the case of men and women, these norms and rules include the idea of male headship and female submission in marriage. Women are forced to abide by these norms and rules. In this case the power is coercive and negative because it serves the interests of one group at the expense of the other. The interview results have shown that African Christian men tend to hold on to their authority (power) in an unyielding way, which results in the continuous oppression of women both in society and in the home.

Though the oppressive nature of the power of males over females in marriage seems clear and unmistakable, most of the women interviewees endorse the practice of male headship and female submission. Most of the females do not oppose or question the fairness of the treatment they receive from males. The views of the majority of the women interviewed include the following:

- Male headship and female submission is taught from both the Bible and the African culture. They are not seen as in conflict with each other and therefore the perception is that not to adhere to this would amount to disobeying both African culture and God.
- In becoming a Christian most African people do not reject all cultural beliefs and practices. They still adhere to the dictates of culture, which came first.
- Teaching about gender equality is not biblical and results in women refusing to submit to their husbands. Women should not ask their husbands to perform roles and responsibilities meant for females, such as household and child-rearing tasks.

In concurrence with these interview results the existing literature indicates that most married women find themselves in a position where they are dependent on the husband. Their economic position, their status in society, their quality of life and ability to support themselves and their children are affected, sometimes severely, when the husband leaves, dies or divorces them. This is a result of the mind-set of the husband as sole provider. The results of the study have shown that women tend not to build careers or find work because they should wait on their husbands to provide for everything. The study has shown that some Christian women even actively oppose proposals directed at

empowering women or propagating equal rights for women. There is often an unwillingness to embrace change and move past both cultural and the so-called "biblical norms" that are detrimental to women on many levels in present-day societies. However, the results of the study did indicate that, though patriarchal culture is still dominant in African Christian people's understanding of male headship and female submission in society and specifically in marriage, some women are challenging the status quo. These women are either well-informed or empowered with regard to gender equality. Some belong to groups that advocate for women rights. They are often familiar with feminist and womanist theories, which have contributed to providing a theoretical framework for reflecting on the basic human rights of women and investigating the oppression suffered by women as a result of cultural phenomena that condone male dominance. Though this is the case in some instances, the study has shown that the majority of married African Christian women are still largely unfamiliar with such ideas of social change. Often women, for fear of being divorced by their husbands, would rather remain in and defend their oppressive marriages in order to enjoy the pretentious securities and ostensible benefits thereof. The costs with regard to their human dignity and freedom tend to be either overlooked or dismissed because the price that will have to be paid, is seen as too high.

By means of structural consensus theory, the study has demonstrated that both African males and females find it difficult, even as Christians, to go against the dictates of the culture. The Bible, which originated in a patriarchal context, is not seen as in opposition to patriarchal cultural structures, but rather affirms them. As such, most of the married couples interviewed in the study, find it difficult to distinguish between what is cultural and what is "biblical". The notion among most of them is that both culture and the Bible carry the same message with regard to headship and submission in marriage. Therefore, inequality continues and women are mostly seen as being inferior to men. Making use of conflict theory, the study established there are often severe power imbalances in African Christian marriages. The male is the dominant figure who makes all decisions. This is often to the detriment of females. In most cases conflicts are solved by means of unilateral male power.

By means of functionalist theories of society, the study has shown that the ideology of male headship and female submission culminates in specific roles and responsibilities

for males and females in society and marriage. African Christian males and females have a different status in society, and different roles and responsibilities in marriage. The results of the interviews show that men fulfil influential and significant roles both in the home and in the society whereas women are confined to the home. They should not be in the workplace earning an income, but at home nurturing children. This also corresponds with the existing literature, which indicates that traditionally, the female children were not valued as much as males. Therefore, only boys were educated. They were the ones who were to take responsibility for women and children later in life. As for a female child, she learns from an early age that she will be taken care of by her husband she gets married. Where women can no longer be sure of such care in contemporary society, traditional beliefs and practices come into conflict with reality and more often than not women and children are the casualties.

Growing up in the African cultural context, children are socialized and expected to exhibit behavioral traits that are in line with the rules and norms their culture. This starts in childhood through lessons embedded in stories and role-play. These deeply embedded views are, as the results of the study have shown, not likely to be much affected by religion or an individual's conversion to Christianity. Individuals who try to change social rules and norms will probably find themselves on the margins of society. The married African Christians who were interviewed, all have close connections with their kin in rural areas. This results in their acceptance and practice of male headship and female submission in accordance with the norms and expectations of their traditional communities. They feel themselves constrained by the beliefs and customs of the larger cultural environment and are not simply free to think and choose for themselves. Should they deviate from cultural norms, the family is likely to intervene.

Attitudes and practices with regard to male headship and female submission in African Christian marriages is significantly influenced by the customary practice of *lobola*. The findings of the study have revealed that understandings and behaviours are greatly affected by the payment or non-payment of *lobola*. As the only traditional custom to legitimize African marriages, African Christian all the African men interviews stated that they were obliged to pay the *lobola* price to "get their wives". As husbands who have paid *lobola*, they feel they have full "ownership" of their wives. This means, in effect, that a

husband can abuse his wife without the fear of her leaving him – she is bound by the payment of *lobola*, which she or the family might not be able to return if she divorces him. However, the findings show that that even in the event of abuse, most women will not be likely to consider divorce due to the stigma attached to it. They would rather suffer at the hands of an abusive husband than to lose respect in the society as a result of divorce. On the other hand, the findings show that most women do not feel a sense of belonging to their husbands if *lobola* is not paid. Also, they feel no obligation to submit to their husbands. For these women, payment of *lobola* suggests that their husbands sufficiently value them. It is therefore clear from the findings that the payment or non-payment of *lobola* remains a contentious issue which contributes to people's perceptions of male headship and female submission and of the value of persons.

The findings reveal that the church generally keeps silence with regard to cultural matter and simply looks on as cultural norms prevail. In many subtle ways churches even tend to reinforce male headship. Findings show that churches mainly focus on teaching women traditional roles and responsibilities in the marriage and the home. Men rarely meet to discuss such issues. The perception is that it is the women who are easily carried away and need to be reminded of their place to avoid unnecessary marital conflict, which can even culminate in divorce.

Existing research with regard to African traditional perspectives has shown clearly defined gender roles in African cultures. Roles are dictated by the patriarchal mind-set, also with regard to marital roles. African people are socialized and raised with the belief that males and females are not equal, and that the male is more powerful than and superior to the female. This socialisation affects people's attitudes with regard to their own and the other sex, and results in different roles being assigned to the sexes. Categorizing men and women in this manner tends to regulate their behaviour towards each other. The differences between men and women is accentuated and increased by structures present in society. The empirical data have shown both African males and females (Christian or otherwise) do not question such structures or beliefs since they are so ingrained.

Patriarchal cultural beliefs influence the Christian understanding and practice of male headship and female submission in marriage. Ephesians 5:22-24, a commonly used

passage to teach "headship and submission" among Christians, has been briefly investigated. This biblical passage that address the subject of headship and submission, stems from a patriarchal context. The study has found that African Christians often do not understand such scriptural passages critically in view of their cultural context, but accept them on face value and use them to reinforce existing patriarchal tendencies in African cultures. There are, however, some African Christian females who are critical of patriarchy and see the Bible as oppressive to women since the Bible does not contribute to alleviating their suffering on account of patriarchal cultural values. The narrative interviews with Shona married Christians in Zimbabwe demonstrated this. Both African culture and the biblical understanding of the African Christians are rooted in patriarchy. Males and females assume their different roles not only because of their cultural beliefs but also because they feel the Bible commands them to do so. The study therefore finds that, among the African Christians, the Bible is used in an oppressive manner to reinforce African cultural beliefs regarding the superiority of males and the inferiority of females. This manifests in oppressive practices of which *lobola* is one. These practices continue to hold women in a subordinate position. Many women endure severe hardships in their marriage. They are trapped because their husband has paid a large sums of money to marry them. *Lobola* then becomes the reason why they are married and remain married. What marriage should be about from a Christian theological perspective, does not come into play.

The paradigm of this study is social constructionism, which departs from the premise that human beings are social beings who continually fashion their beliefs and their ways of life. The use of this paradigm allows challenging the status quo given that human beings and their cultures are products of social processes and as such there is nothing about people that should be considered solid and left unchallenged. The current understandings and practices of the African married Christians, regarding headship and submission, which in themselves have been influenced and have changed over time, should therefore be open to constant evaluation, analysis, and critique and questioning. The study shows that from a pastoral perspective, it is possible to use the Bible to counteract oppressive tendencies towards women even though the Bible itself originated in a patriarchal context and reflects its cultures in many ways. The gospel message of Jesus Christ and not an ancient cultural mind-set and cultural practices, however, was already counter-cultural in biblical times and that message remains relevant today. It can provide hope for liberating

both males and females and bringing about a power balance in marriage and in society. The gospel message centres on love and a profound respect for the other. This is what the church teaches and this mind-set should have an effect on the attitudes, perceptions, behaviour and practices of Christian believers.

The study has further presented a pastoral perspective on the issue of male headship and female submission by demonstrating the need for the church to intentionally teach the values of the gospel message in order to address contemporary understandings and practices of the relationship between men and women, and even more so in marriage. The study has shown that, though traditional African marital practices are similar to patriarchal practices reflected in Scripture, they do not intersect with love, which is the very spirit of the gospel. The study therefore suggests that if a power balance in marriage can be attained, the word of the God who is love, should be allowed to speak into the lives of the African men and women in order to transform their lives. A transformed life will comprehend that God did not create humanity so that people should oppress one another but to love one another. The African husband will understand that women are not to be treated with contempt but should be loved and treated as God's treasured creation – that they should do unto the other as they would want to be done unto them. African culture, as all cultures and cultural practices, can and should be transformed in the light of the gospel.

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APPENDIX 1: AN INFORMED CONSENT LETTER



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

AN INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

MALE HEADSHIP AND FEMALE SUBMISSION IN MARRIAGE AMONG AFRICAN CHRISTIANS: A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is to invite you to participate in the above study. Before you give your consent (by signing on this letter) to volunteer, please read the following information to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Purpose of the study

This study is to investigate factors which influence the Shona Christians' understanding and practice of male headship and female submission in marriage. The data from this study will be used to develop a pastoral care model that is grounded in our Shona culture and in the Bible.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be interviewed. The interview is designed to take at most 20 to 40 minutes of your time.

Risks and discomforts

This study involves your time, so it might inconvenience you in one way or the other.

Benefits

As a volunteer participating in this study, you are not going to receive any gifts-monetary or in any kind. However, we hope that this study will benefit the society as it is going to contribute knowledge needed in addressing African marriage related issues as we look at both what our culture and the Bible say. It is also hoped that this study will help pastors fully understand the experiences of the Shona couples regarding male headship and female submission in marriage, resulting in them addressing these issues appropriately.

Participants' rights

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop participation at anytime without penalty. To stop, simply let me as the interviewer know and will stop asking any further. Also, you can during the interview indicate that you are not comfortably to answer any question.

Confidentiality

All information you give will be treated as confidential. If, however you would like your name to be used in the survey, kindly let me know and I will write it against your recorded interview questions. In the event that you withdraw from participating, all your data would be destroyed. Data from this study will be used for academic purposes only, hence it will be available to the university and to scholars. It will also be available to those in pastoral care counselling. Any report or article that may come out of this study will not identify you as the volunteer.

By signing below and returning a completed questionnaire to me, it means you have read the information provided above and you are agreeing to participate in the study. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Oscar Maisiri".

Oscar Maisiri
Signed at: Pretoria
Date: 10/09/2012

Your Signature: _____

Signed at: _____

Date: _____

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Appendix 2: Interview Guidelines

Item	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4	Value 5
1. Gender	Male	Female			
2. Age	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Over 60
3. Years Married	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-40	Over 40
4. Profession					
5. Church Affiliation	Pentecostal	Mainline			
6. Spouse (Husband/Wife)	Christian	Not Christian			

1. What immediately comes into your mind when you hear the words male headship and female submission?

2. How did you see the issue of headship and submission being modelled to you as you were growing up?

3. Have your childhood views of headship and female submission since changed?

4. How would you describe your current role as a husband/wife in your marriage?

5. Are you currently enjoying your role as a husband or wife? Please explain your answer.

6. **Female:** Do you think you should submit to your husband? If your answer is yes, do you sometimes find it difficult to do? Please explain your answer. **Male:** Do you expect your wife to submit to you? If your answer is yes, then in what areas? How do you feel if your wife does not submit to you in these areas?

7. Has the issue of headship and submission been a source of conflict and tension in your marriage? Explain your answer. If you have had conflict in this regard, have you tried to get help and if yes, what kind of help?

8. Do you think the issue of male headship and female submission in marriage is sufficiently or correctly addressed in church?

9. In your opinion, are there aspects in the Shona culture that seem to promote inequality between sexes? If so, how should Shona Christians deal with this?

10. If you had not paid *lobola* or had not been paid *lobola* for, do you think you would treat your spouse differently?