

**A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED WRITINGS OF E. CHITANDO, G.
WEST AND A. VAN KLINKEN ON AFRICAN MASCULINITIES IN RELATION TO
GENDER JUSTICE**

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Health**

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DECLARATION

I, Sokfa Francis John, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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 - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced
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This thesis has also been professionally edited by Dr. Karen Buckenham.

Sokfa Francis John

Date

Dr. Lillian Siwila
Supervisor

Date

DEDICATION

To Prof. E. Chitando, Prof. G. West and Dr. van Klinken, and all the people they have worked with, researched, or on whose experiences they have reflected in order to produce knowledge on African masculinities and religion.

Also to the coordinators, sponsors, staff and students of the Gender, Religion and Health Pilot programme.

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Finally, and more importantly, my deepest gratitude to God for his grace, love, and for making me prosper in whatever I do.

ABSTRACT

The broad field of men and masculinities is increasingly being enriched by the emergent religious discourse on the subject in Africa. At the heart of this religious discourse is an agenda for change and transformation of men which owes largely to the influence of African Women Theologians and their struggle for gender justice. This study was an attempt to do a theological analysis of the writings of three scholars who belong to this trend, within the framework of the theology of gender justice. These are, A. van Klinken, G. West and E. Chitando. The study is interpretive in nature, and sought to re-read and re-present the writings of these scholars in a way that enhances their utilization and appreciation. Thus, using the thematic networks analysis, the study explored firstly, the themes that emerge from the writings of these scholars; secondly, the extent to which these themes contribute to the general discourse on African masculinities and gender justice; and thirdly, the ways in which these writings can further contribute to such discourses. The resultant analysis showed that specific themes (termed the global themes) form the major claim and heart of the writings of each scholar. For Chitando, “men can, should and must change!” West was able to show that given the space and tools such as Contextual Bible Study, men can change and embrace alternative forms of masculinities that are life-promoting. Van Klinken on his part argues for an alternative framework for analyzing masculinities and a different approach to gender justice. Drawing from a critical evaluation of these different positions, it was recommended that their approaches can be enhanced with more attention to the inequality inherent in the gender relations among men themselves. Moreover, religious approaches to the transformation of men also need to emphasize to men the costs of harmful masculinities and what they stand to benefit from proposed alternative masculinities *as men*.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Men and masculinities as a field of study is closely related to feminism both in its origin and in its largely “value orientation” (Capraro, 2004: 24). The latter refers to the activist nature of scholarly engagement with masculinities in the sense that most scholars would think of themselves as being part of a broad undertaking to bring about change in men (Capraro, 2004: 24). This orientation is also reflected in scholarly religious discourses on masculinities in Africa. This study is on the writings of three scholars within this religious discourse in Africa, namely, Ezra Chitando, Gerald West and Adriaan van Klinken. Chitando and West can be considered as more actively involved in this project of changing men, while van Klinken’s involvement is more at the level of understanding the role of religion and religious resources in bringing about change in men.

Relevant for the understanding of the writings of these three scholars within African religious discourse on masculinities is a basic background to the group known as the *Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians* (hereafter, The Circle). Thus, as a way of providing a general introduction to the entire study, this chapter begins with a background to the study that highlights the place and connection of the Circle to the present subject and context of study. This is followed by a preliminary review of literature intended to also show the relevance of this study. The questions the research intended to answer and the objectives are then stated. The chapter also provides some details on the theoretical framework as well as the design and methodology of the study. The last sections of the chapter highlight the limitation of the study and finally, the structure of the study.

1.2. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

The Circle was inaugurated in 1989 with the aim of creating an enabling environment for women to theologize as a community with reference to their socio-cultural experiences. Members of the Circle are committed to researching, writing and publishing works on “issues affecting African

women and women of African descent in religion and culture”.¹ Through their works, members of the Circle have contributed immensely in facilitating the incorporation of gender issues into African theological discourses when they insisted on examining certain religious and cultural factors that shape how women are perceived and related to (Oduyoye, 2002:38-39). Their efforts have encouraged a conscious move away from the rather gender insensitive ways many African male theologians had previously done theology (Oduyoye, 2002:35).

Having engaged with several issues affecting women for years, members of the Circle felt the need to engage male African theologians in their quest for gender justice. Thus, in their 2007 Pan-African conference, panels were incorporated with the theme “liberating masculinities”. This called for participation by male scholars of religion and theology such as Gerald West and Ezra Chitando, two of the scholars whose works I analyze in this study. The panels are reported to have been very instructive as well as inciting heated debates especially on the roles women play in the construction of masculinities.² Male theologians were also challenged to take up projects that promote gender justice through the transformation of masculinities. It is observed that this marked a significant contribution of members of the Circle in opening up theological and religious examination of masculinities in Africa (van Klinken, 2011b:227). The collection of writings in the book *Redemptive Masculinities*, edited by Ezra Chitando and Sophie Chirongoma (2012), is considered one of the outcomes of this dialogue between members of the Circle and African male theologians (van Klinken 2011b:227).

This link between these scholars and the emergence of theological discourse on African masculinities partly attracted me to their writings as key scholars in the field. Chitando, for instance, has been described as a pioneer, with ground breaking studies in religion and African masculinities (van Klinken, 2011a:111). Adrian van Klinken was not part of the event with the members of the Circle that led to the opening of this field. However, his writings reveal a huge familiarity and engagement with the works and concerns of both the members of the Circle and the other two scholars, namely, G. West and E. Chitando. He is also one of the scholars that have written at some length on African masculinities and religion.

¹ The Circle, Yaounde Report, 2007, p.3.

² The Circle, Yaoundé Report, 2007, p.6.

Against this backdrop, my motivation for this study is based firstly, on my longstanding interest in religion, especially in relation to issues of oppression and marginalization. But more specifically, I am interested in the role religion plays in both promoting and combating such issues. My second motivation is a curious fascination with issues of men and masculinities based on my rather recent exposure to the field through informed discussions on gender and related issues. This explains why I found the works of these scholars quite appealing, especially because religion and religious resources hold important places in their works on masculinities both in understanding how masculinities are constructed and possible ways of reconstructing masculinities where they are deemed dangerous.

The selected writings of these scholars can be broadly located in the general discourse on masculinities and the expressed concern for new ways of being “men” which promote life rather than deny it (Morrell, 2001:1998). And given their connection to African women theologians, they can be seen as part of a broader discourse on issues relating to ideals such as gender justice, gender equality, and liberation of women, which are some of the concerns associated with the liberation theologies of African women theologians (Chitando, 2009). However, working within this broad spectrum does not necessarily follow that they are all promoting these ideals or that they all share the same goals.

Thus, what I intend to do in this study is to systematically analyze selected writings of these scholars on African masculinities in relation to the ideal of gender justice. The goal of the study is primarily interpretive in nature which in the humanities is usually aimed at rereading and re-presenting works to enhance better appreciation and utilization (Maimon et al. 2012:183). I attempt to understand and interpret the themes that emerge from the selected texts in relation to my research questions and objectives. Based on my reflection on the themes and issues that would emerge, I shall explore how their works can further contribute to the general discourse on African masculinities in relation to gender justice.

1.3. Research Questions

The key question to be addressed in this study is: To what extent do the selected theological writings of E. Chitando, G. West and A. van Klinken on African masculinities contribute (or can further contribute) to the discourse on African masculinities in relation to gender justice?

In order to address this question, I will attempt to answer the following sub-questions:

- What are the key themes that emerge from the selected religious/theological writings of these scholars on African masculinities?
- How do these themes enhance the theoretical and practical engagement with issues of masculinities and gender justice in Africa?
- In what ways can they further contribute to the discourse on African masculinities in relation to gender justice?

1.4. Research Objective

This study aims at an interpretive analysis of selected writings of E. Chitando, G. West and A. van Klinken on African masculinities in relation to gender justice. Thus, the main objectives of the study include:

- To identify the key themes that emerged in their selected writings on African masculinities.
- To examine how these themes in theory and practice enhance the general religious discourse on African masculinities in relation to gender justice.
- To explore ways in which these writings can further contribute to the discourse both in theory and in practice.

1.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is theoretically and theologically located in the ideology and theology of gender justice. Kang, Phiri and Dube developed a theology of gender justice³ that flows from the idea that justice is a character of God and the justice of God needs to be reflected in male-female relationship of *humans* created in the image of God. It is only then that *all* forms of oppressive

³ This is discussed in more detail in chapter two.

aspects of these relations will be transformed (Phiri 2002; Dube, 2001). Gender justice here involves the fullness of life for all regardless of gender. My usage of this theology as a framework for this study might suggest some redundancy as it would seem from a shallow observation that all three scholars actually promote or advocate for the same ideal.

To be clear, my primary focus is not gender justice *as such* but African masculinities *in relation to* gender justice. In one way or the other, these two issues are interconnected in the religious discourse on masculinities in African scholarship and in the tradition of the Circle from which they emerge. Looking at masculinities with this awareness serves to enhance the understanding of the study. The usage of gender justice as a framework for the study relies on the idea that among Chitando, West and van Klinken there is not necessarily an agreement on what specifically constitutes gender justice. Moreover, they do not necessarily all seem to see themselves as arguing for or promoting a specific notion, practice or ideal of gender justice, or even that their works are necessarily about gender justice as the analysis has shown in chapters three to six.

As a theoretical framework for this study, the theology of gender justice briefly explained above (and detailed in chapter two), emphasized two words, “human” and “all”. This emphasis was intended to guard against a narrow or limiting understanding and application in this study. For instance, in religious scholarship on men and masculinities and gender generally there seems to be a tendency to provide an image of women as the oppressed and men as the oppressor as I have noted in chapter six. But the notion of gender justice here is intended to also interrogate such understandings. Thus, it is informed by Harrison’s definition of justice as “rightly ordered relationships of mutuality within the total web of our several relations” (1985:253 quoted in Kang 2005:286). This definition allowed me to deeply understand and engage with the themes that were drawn from the writings of these scholars in a way that is not limited by any simplistic or exclusive understanding of masculinities in relation to gender justice. Thus, I was able to detect, for instance, that their usage of “masculinity” is very much tied to the biological concept of “male” and that they focus more on dominant masculinities and the unjust relations between men and women without giving much attention to subordinated or other forms of less powerful masculinities – with some exception in van Klinken’s work. The theology of gender justice as I

have used it also provided the tool with which I was able to measure, summarize and organize some of the contributions of Chitando, West and van Klinken in chapter six.

1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

As I have stated above, this study is primarily an interpretive analysis. This is not to suggest that it does not contain some criticality. The purpose of such studies is largely to enhance understanding, engagement and even utilization of the subject or object of analysis (Maimon et al. 2012:183). Thus, its starting point is critical examination or reading of the text with open mindedness and admittance of a level of uncertainty regarding one's portrayal, as many different meanings are possible depending on the person and perspective from which the same object or subject is examined (Maimon et al. 2012:183). As Elaine Maimon et al. further note, "no matter what framework you use, analysis often entails taking something apart and then putting it back together by figuring out how the parts make up a cohesive whole. The goal of analysis is to create a meaningful interpretation" (Maimon et al. 2012:185). This understanding shaped and informed the design of this study and the specific methodology and analytic tool employed.

1.6.1. Research Paradigm: Interpretive

This study is situated within the interpretive paradigm. A research paradigm is explained to constitute a researcher's framework of thinking which guides his or her behaviour as a researcher. Such a framework usually includes "a set of fundamental assumptions and beliefs" that make up a certain perception of the world (Wahyuni, 2012:69). Dina Wahyuni (2012) highlights two important philosophical dimensions that can be used to differentiate between research paradigms. These are epistemology and ontology (Wahyuni, 2012:69). Ontology has to do with how reality is perceived. And from a research perspective, reality has been perceived by some (such as positivists, postpositivists, or realists) as objective. In other words, reality is independent of social agents or actors and how these actors interpret reality. On the other hand, others (like the interpretivists and constructivists) see reality as subjective. That is, it depends on social actors, and their interpretation of it. Thus, persons play a part in the construction of social phenomena (Wahyuni, 2012:69-70). Epistemologically, paradigms are distinguished based on the beliefs about knowledge generation processes, appreciation and application of what may be

considered acceptable knowledge (Wahyuni, 2012:69). Thus, the research paradigm shapes everything about the research to be undertaken, including its design and methodology.

The interpretive paradigm within which this study is located allows for subjectivity, multiplicity, changeability and social constructionism in a way that recognizes the active participation of social actors (Wahyuni, 2012:69-70). It is the appropriate paradigm for this study because of the nature of its object/subject and goal. Most studies, as reviewed in chapter two, suggest that issues of masculinities can best be understood and engaged with within this paradigm due to the nature of masculinities as multiple, fluid, socially constructed, slippery and geographical (Connell, 2005; Ratele, 2008a; Morrell, 2001). This paradigm also allowed for my own interpretation of the writings of the scholars I have analysed, because it recognizes the freedom to produce subjective details by the researcher. And finally, other than being appropriate, the qualitative approach adopted for this work adequately fits into the interpretive paradigm.⁴

1.6.2. Methodology: Qualitative-Textual

In line with one of the key features of qualitative studies, this work is concerned with “depth” of information and analysis rather than “spread” or quantity (Dawson, 2007:16). Guijuan Lin (2009:179) notes that literature based qualitative methodology involves reading, analyzing and sorting of literature in order to distinguish what is essential. He further refers to it as the “non-contact” method because the researcher does not deal directly with the object of study but indirectly, through literature (Lin, 2009:179). Thus, while my object of study is African masculinities in relation to gender justice, I am not engaging with African men (and/or women) directly, but indirectly through the works of three scholars as my primary sources. Lin further made a general observation to justify literature based studies. He noted that “Literature materials are the crystallization of wisdom, are the ocean of knowledge, have important values for the development of human society, history, culture and research scholars” (Lin, 2009:179).

⁴ The reasoning behind this is based on Wahyuni (2012:70) which presents the fundamental beliefs of research paradigms in social sciences, clearly presenting the distinctions among positivism, postpositivism, interpretivism and pragmatism.

1.6.3. Data Collection

The writings that form the core objects of analysis in this study are the selected writings of Ezra Chitando, Adrian van Klinken and Gerald West. These scholars have written widely, thus, the choice of what writings to use was determined by the objectives of this study and the theoretical framework. Thus, being a study on African Masculinities in relation to gender justice, I have analyzed only writings that are related to, or deemed relevant to these issues. Thus, in the case of Gerald West for instance, it was very relevant to also examine some of his works on Biblical interpretation in order to understand his approach to issues of masculinities.

To ensure that the amount of data collected was representative of the core ideas of these scholars on African masculinities, a number of steps were taken. Through my supervisor, the scholars were contacted for a bibliography of their written works on masculinities. I also frequented Adriaan van Klinken's (wordpress) blog⁵ where he updates his published works, provides downloadable PDF versions of some, and information about his works in progress.

1.6.4. Data Analysis and Analytic Tool: Thematic Networks Analysis

Textual data such as the ones for this research have to be analyzed systematically in order for the researcher to arrive at insightful conclusions and produce relevant knowledge. This can be done in various ways using different analytical tools depending on factors such as the research methodology, nature of research, or preference of the researcher (Dawson, 2007:114). The qualitative-textual nature of this study as well as the diverse and fluid nature of the subject of study influenced my choice of the thematic method of analysis. This involves analyzing data by themes (Dawson, 2007:120). Amongst the advantages of this kind of analysis to my work is the fact that it is flexible and inductive; that is, I do not impose certain themes on the text but allow the themes to emerge from the data. Moreover, other background materials are allowed to be used in the analysis if they help the understanding and interpretation of the themes (cf. Braun and Clarke, 2006:80; Dawson, 2007:120). For this study, I employed a specific kind of thematic analysis, known as the *thematic networks analysis* as my analytic tool. This tool is proposed by Jennifer Attride-Stirling (2001) as a method for analyzing textual data thematically in qualitative research.

⁵ adriaanvanklinken.wordpress.com

Thematic networks analysis retains the qualities and advantages of thematic analysis generally. Yet it improves on it further by presenting the analysis in terms of thematic networks, using “web-like” illustrations in the form to show the main themes in the texts (Attride-Stirling, 2001:386). Thus, thematic networks analysis aims at uncovering the important themes in texts at different levels and to present and structure these themes clearly. Its advantage over other thematic tools is “the web-like network [which it offers] as an organizing principle and a representational means, and it makes explicit the procedures that may be employed in going from text to interpretation” (Attride-Stirling, 2001:388).

The thematic networks analysis, among other important approaches, is informed by the argumentation theory. This theory “defines and elaborates the typical, formal elements of arguments as a means of exploring the connections between the explicit statements and the implicit meanings in people’s discourse” (Attride-Stirling, 2001:378) Thus, argumentation, within this framework, represents a “progression from acceptable data through a warrant to a claim” (Attride-Stirling, 2001:378). The claim is seen as the conclusion while the warrant is the premises and principles that support the conclusion and through which the conclusion is arrived at. The thematic networks analysis draws on this idea of progression and argumentation to develop a way of organizing text into basic, organizing and global themes.

Using this tool, the texts analyzed for each of the scholars in this study is broken up into Basic, Organizing and Global themes. The basic themes are the “lowest-order” or most elementary themes or premises in the text. Related or similar basic themes are then grouped into specific principles or more abstract themes which make up the Organizing or “middle-level” themes. These portray the principles that inform the Global theme. This is the major claim that encapsulates every other theme and can also be interpreted as the author’s conclusion or major proposition/claim (Attride-Stirling, 2001:386). Thus, in the development of a thematic network, the basic themes are identified first and worked through the organizing themes to the global theme. This is presented in the form of web-like diagram to portray its non-hierarchical pattern, to allow for fluidity and to show the interconnection among the themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001:389). The diagram below is a model for such presentation.

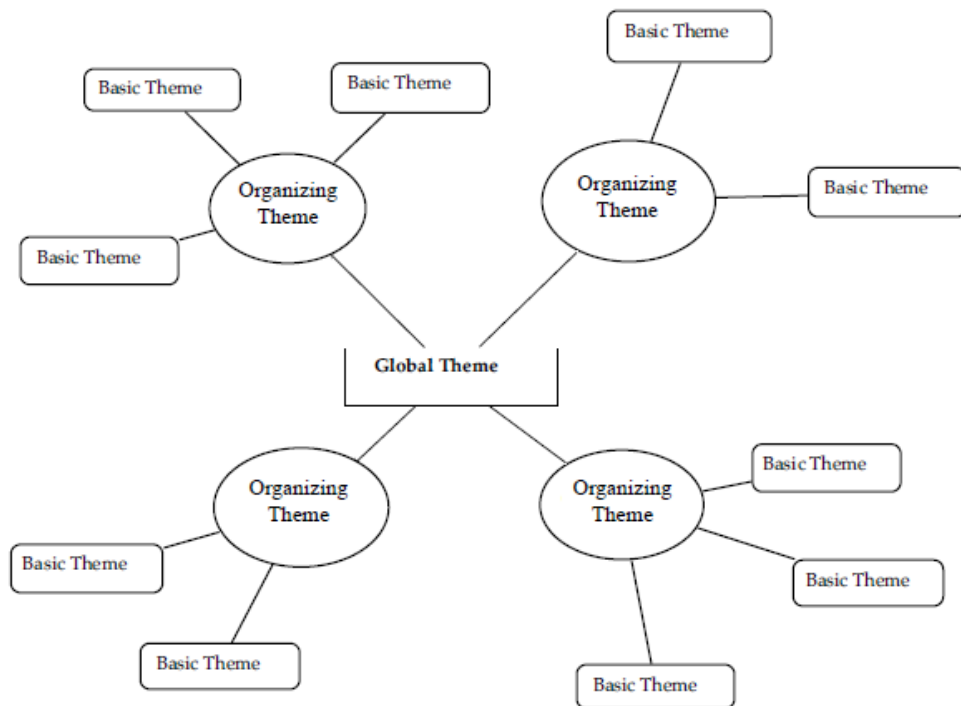


Figure 1: Structure of thematic networks
Source: Attride-Stirling, 2001:389

Following the guidelines by the proponent of this analytic tool (Attride-Stirling, 2001), I constructed thematic networks for each of the scholars in a chapters. I then described and discussed the themes and their interconnection. I interpreted the patterns and then developed a section that engages critical issues that emerge from the themes and patterns. The themes were basically formulated from ideas that run through and across the different works by each scholar. Moreover, some of my basic themes would not necessarily capture specific statements as they were said or written, but rather, capture running ideas. The reason is that I am not working with texts transcribed from interviews, but with articles and books well developed and well written to convey particular ideas.

1.7. IMPORTANT LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Given the textual nature of this work and the critical as well as theoretical differences on the issue of African masculinities, it is important for the understanding of my work that I highlight some limitations:

- This study is a short dissertation for a master's program by coursework. Therefore, it is limited by scope, time frame and required amount of content which does not allow for an exploration of other issues though useful to the study but are not the main focus of the study.
- The analysis is based on “written” works of Chitando, West and van Klinken which I was able to access through the method detailed above. The text-based nature of this work also places some limitations on it. This is because the study would have been further enriched if the research design had included an in-depth interview with these three scholars, and funding as well as the stipulated time frame for the study allowed it.
- The limitations noted in point two above would have allowed for a critical examination that will address issues like the identities, background and social class of these scholars in relation to their motivation for writing on African masculinities. This study addressed these issues only to the extent that they emerge in relation to the objective of the study.
- As noted in the section on research paradigm, the interpretive and qualitative nature of this study allows for subjectivity in both my understanding of the data and my interpretation. Thus, even though other theories and studies were used to support my analysis and engagement with the selected works of these scholars, what is presented is basically my understanding and interpretation. I do not claim to have exhausted all possible interpretations.

1.8. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. The first chapter provides the general introduction to the study. In it I detail the background and motivating factors for the study. I also provide a preliminary literature review, as well as detailed discussions on the theoretical framing, and the research design and methodology I have employed. In the section preceding the current one, I provide some clarity on certain issues that serve as limitations and may raise concern about my study or aspects of it. The second chapter employs a review of literature to provide a

theoretical, thematic, and to an extent, chronological background on the development and key issues in the field of men and masculinities. This enables me to locate the three scholars whose works I am analysing within the theological/religious discourse on African masculinities.

Following my research questions and objectives, and guided by my theoretical framework and methodology, chapters three, four and five provide an analysis of the works of Chitando, West and van Klinken respectively. Chapter six, which is the final chapter, brings together comparable and contrastable elements in the works of the three scholars in an evaluative fashion. In addition to a summary of the study and a general conclusion, I also make some propositions based on my reflection on the issues that emerge during the analysis.

1.9. CONCLUSION

By way of providing a general introduction to this study, this chapter has discussed several issues that guide, shape and direct. This began with a background to the study which highlights the place of the Circle in this study and the general religious discourse on masculinities in Africa. The motivation for the study was also highlighted. This led to a preliminary review of literature on masculinities which was followed by the objectives and research questions the study addressed. The theology of gender justice as a theoretical framework and how it aids the study was explained. The section that followed detailed the research design and methodology for the study. This section covered the research paradigm, data collection, the tool employed for analysis and how it was used, amongst other things. The chapter also highlighted some possible limitations to the study and an explanation of how the entire work is organized, stating what each chapter entails. This general introductory chapter is meant to foster clarity and properly position the reader to navigate the chapters with a better sense of direction and understanding. Against this background, the ensuing chapters fit the different issues and components of the study design into place.

**MAPPING THE TERRAIN:
AN OVERVIEW OF KEY ISSUES AND THEORIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
DISCOURSES ON MEN AND MASCULINITIES**

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a general introduction to this study. It provided the required information regarding the objectives, theory, methodology that amongst other things, give shape and direction to this study. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it is a general background on the key issues and debates on which men and masculinities is based. Second, it is meant to set the stage for, and situate the scholars addressed in, this study. It does this contextually, theoretically, and to an extent, chronologically. Thus, the chapter is basically a construction and presentation of an overview of the development and current state of discourses on African masculinities and related key issues. The chapter begins with a background discussion on the notion of gender and the emergence of the field of masculinities. This is followed by a more focused discussion on the engagement with masculinities in western scholarship. Given the position of Raewyn Connell as the most influential theorist on masculinities in the West, this section also gave some specific attention to Connell's ideas. Moreover, much of the literature used for this study actually reflects this influence, including Robert Morrell's who has written much on the subject in Southern Africa. So, giving Connell's ideas some detailed attention serves to enhance a better understanding of the present subject of study. The discussion then moves on to do the same for masculinities in (Southern) Africa. The chapter further examines theological discourse on masculinities, theories that have been and are still employed in discussing masculinities, and the notion of gender justice both as a theory and as a theology that guides this study.

2.2. GENDER AND MASCULINITIES

Many debates, policies and academic engagements with the subject of gender sometimes tend to portray or treat gender issues as women's and girls' issues (Connell 2005a:1805; Morrell 1998:7). Men seem to be taken for granted as the norm, consequently, "gender" is conceived of as the ways in which women are at variance with this norm. As a result, some gender discourses

quickly narrow down to specific problems associated with women (Connell, 2004). One of the reasons for this tendency is the fact that public and academic discourses on gender and gender equality largely originates from the works of feminist or women activists whose efforts have been directed towards the empowerment of women as a disadvantaged and marginalized group (Capraro, 2004:24).

However, as Connell argues, “gender is inherently relational...it is a relationship of desire and power” (Connell, 2004). In other words, gender has to do with how power is distributed among men and women in different spheres of life. This distribution of power has placed women and girls in a disadvantaged and less privileged position as opposed to that of men and boys (Haslanger, 2000:37-39; Reeves and Baden, 2000:6). If this relational understanding of gender is true, the implication is that in order to effectively deal with issues of gender and gender inequalities, men also need to be studied, analyzed and engaged with (Morrell, 1998a:7).

One argument advanced in support of this position is that in every situation where women are disadvantaged, men are implied (Connell, 2004). For instance, men are mostly seen as the perpetrators of violence against women, even if they are not mentioned in specific cases. In the understanding of HIV and AIDS as a gendered disease with women constituting the largest percentage of affected persons, men are said to be involved in almost every occasion of transmission (van Klinken, 2010:3). And in cases of denial of religious, political, and other positions of influence, men are involved as the monopolists (Connell 2005a:1805-6). Based on this point of view, and the emphasized need to examine and understand men in the context of gender and in relation to women, I now review Western⁶ discourse on masculinities.

2.3. WESTERN INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSE ON MASCULINITIES

A number of factors contribute to the interest in, and emergence of, studies on men and masculinities generally, particularly in the west. Some of these factors include:

- The effort of scholars to combat sexism due to the influence of feminism (Morrell, 1998a:7).

⁶ It should be noted that the use of the term “West” here, relates mainly, but not limited, to places like Australia and United States where many pioneering works on masculinities have been done.

- The huge focus on women and issues of gender equality in the 1970s and 1980s which gave rise to a deliberate attempt in the 1990s to reclaim the notion of “gender” as an inclusive term, rather than a synonym for “women” (Chitando and Chirongoma 2012:8).
- The recognition and increasing awareness of the stake of men in gender relations and gender inequalities (Morrell, 2007a:15-17). The acceptance by men that they oppress women and the attempt to make gender studies a “holistic enterprise and not something confined to the study of women” (Morrell, 1998a:7).

The above factors, amongst others, saw different kinds of responses from men (Capraro 2004:25), such as the formation of Men’s movements to address concerns related to men (Messner, 2000:11), and the inclusion of masculinities as a critical aspect of gender scholarship (Morrell, 1998a:7). These developments contributed to the emergence and development of the studies of men and masculinities (Morrell, 2007a:15-17; Capraro, 2004:25).

The study of men and masculinities is primarily a field of knowledge that engages the experiences and identities of men. It “focuses on the lives of men, and in particular, on the lives of men as they are framed or made meaningful by prevailing models of what it means to be a man in any particular historical or cultural milieu” (Capraro 2004:23). In other words, it is an attempt to interpret the lives of men and what is known about them “through the new lens of masculinity” (Capraro 2004:24). This is based on the understanding that all societies have sets and forms of gender relations as well as social practices that are associated with the position of men and women. Masculinities, therefore, refer to these patterns of social practices associated with men’s positions, as distinguished from those of women (Connell, 2004).

In its early stage, studies on men and masculinities were mainly focused on creating awareness about the damaging consequences of the roles and socialization of men. Thus, most masculinities scholars displayed and still display an activist tendency (Capraro, 2004:25). One major argument that developed over time from debates and research on masculinities is that men are capable of change and promoting gender reforms, contrary to some opposing long held beliefs (Connell, 2005a:18011).

At the heart of this growing western discourse on masculinities are the writings and ideas of the Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell. In the field of men's and masculinities studies, Connell is regarded as the most influential theorist (Wedgwood, 2009:329). Her book, *Masculinities*, which was first published in 1995, and then a second edition in 2005, is rated as one of the ten most influential books in Australian sociology, and is reported to have even greater influence outside Australia. It is widely cited in hundreds of journals in more than a hundred fields of study, but more so in the field of gender studies (Wedgwood, 2009:329). One of Connell's most important contributions is the creation of a theory that replaced the popular sex-role theory of gender (Morrell, 1998b:606). She⁷ emphasized the importance of history in the study of masculinities, exemplified in the critical feminist assessments of masculinities that are historically specific. Her work also promoted a more dynamic examination and understanding of masculinities, and the idea that individual men also play their parts in the development and enactment of forms of masculinities that are dominant (Wedgwood, 2009:330; Morrell, 1998b:606).

Central to Connell's refutation of both biological and social determinism, and certain compromises between the two theories, is her theory of embodiment. She argues that bodies in their own rights as bodies do matter in the constructions, experience, enactment and discourses on masculinities and gender (Connell, 2005b:48-66). Bodies are at the same time objects as well as agents of social practice, not mere passive receptors of social and cultural messages. They are actively involved in the construction and practice of masculinities in different ways, and by entering the social sphere, are drawn into and made part of history. However, they do not in the process cease to be what they are – bodies (Connell, 2005b:48-66). Bodily differences, therefore, are not, in a fixed way, the basis of gender patterns. Bodies, rather, are best to be seen as reference points in the practice of gender and masculinities (Connell, 2004). In other words, we can talk about masculinities for instance with reference to male bodies but this does not mean that the practice of masculinities is fixed to male bodies. This understanding opens up the room for understanding the term "masculinity" more as an abstraction which, though is understood with reference to the male body, is not tied to it, thus, recognizing the possibility of the

⁷ Connell, known as Robert Connell before her medically-assisted gender reassignment, is now legally Raewyn Connell and prefers to be referred to as a woman (she) even with reference to past works (Wedgwood, 2009:338).

enactment or performance of masculinities by non-males. This idea is very clearly expressed by Judith Butler in her assertion that gender is distinct from sex. It is neither a “casual result” of, nor “fixed” to, sex (Butler, 1990:6). She holds that

If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for instance, the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of “men” will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that “women” will interpret only female bodies (Butler, 1990:6)..

Another interesting idea that emerged from Connell’s works is the acknowledgement of diverse and multiple masculinities and the gender relations among these masculinities. She identifies a hierarchy in these relations which allows for a classification of masculinities into four: hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalized masculinities. While a detailed discussion of this hierarchy will not be offered here, it is important to dedicate a few lines to the notion of hegemonic masculinity. This will promote a clearer interaction with the works analyzed in the chapters of this thesis. The kinds of masculinities the three scholars analyzed in this work and present as harmful or dangerous can be understood within the concept of hegemonic masculinities.

Hegemonic masculinity has been described as an overemphasized and sometimes misunderstood concept (Wedgwood, 2009:335). It is at the same time, the most popular and influential aspect of the masculinity theory of Connell’s (Beasley, 2012:750; Wedgwood, 2009:335). Although this concept has been variously defined, interpreted and used, it is originally intended to be understood within the context of the hierarchical gender relations among masculinities as topping the hierarchy of “historically specific” masculinities. These include masculinities that are subordinate, complicit and marginalized (Wedgwood, 2009:335). The notion of hegemonic masculinities describes the situation in which one group claims and holds a rather pervasive dominant and leading place in social life. It is the cultural reality in which one form of masculinity is elevated above others in any given place, and sustains the domination of other men as well as women (Connell 2005b:77)

It is important to highlight immediately the fact that the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been highly challenged and criticized for several reasons over the years (Wedgwood, 2009:335; Moller, 2007; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). This led to a “Rethink” of the concept by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). They did not only respond to some of the issues raised against the concept but attempted a reformulation of the concept to include women in the constructions of gender among men as well as recognize the active, intimate and complex involvement of bodies in social process of gender, amongst other things (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005:851).

Western discourse on men and masculinities has generally examined the construction of masculinities in relation to different settings and spheres of life, including health, sports, violence and education, amongst other things (Capraro 2004; Connell 2005b; Morrell, 2007). It has also influenced non-Western discourses on masculinities. African masculinities discourse can lay claim to a certain level of originality and uniqueness. However, it has been informed by the western discourse whether by way of challenging western notions of masculinities or by using concepts and theories rooted in western discourses to explain, examine or understand African masculinities, such as the concept of hegemonic masculinities which is said to be widely used in gender research in South Africa (Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger, 2012:11). The African masculinities discourse is now examined in some detail below.

2.4. AFRICAN MASCULINITIES DISCOURSE

For the purpose of clarity, and bearing in mind the fact that the term “African” may not have a universally accepted understanding, the working and broad understanding of an “African” here refers to a person who is indigenous to, and inhabits the African continent (Uchendu 2008:3). “They include all the races and racial mixtures that are harboured and continue to be harboured in Africa along with the inhabitants of islands on the Atlantic and Indian oceans who regard themselves as Africans and are duly recognized as such by the African Union” (Uchendu 2008:3). “African masculinities” therefore, refers to masculinities and how they are understood, constructed and performed in Africa (cf. Morrell and Ouzgane, 2005:1-8).

Available literature shows an increasing engagement with the subject of African masculinities in the continent. It has been argued that the HIV and AIDS pandemic played a key role in bringing the discourse on African masculinities in Africa to the fore (van Klinken 2010:3). However, African discourse on masculinities is by no means limited to the epidemic. Masculinities have been analyzed in relation to a variety of issues. Some of these include sexuality, HIV and AIDS, fatherhood, history, health, religion, culture, education, power, conflict and violence, as well as issues relating to theory (Richter and Morrell, 2006; Mathewson, 2009; 2012; Harris, 2012; Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger, 2012; Elliot, 2003; Brown, Sorrell and Raffaelli, 2005; Ratele, 2008; Odimegwu and Okembo, 2008; Barker and Ricardo, 2005).

Barker and Ricardo (2005) deal in some detail, with the constructions of masculinities in Africa and their implication for conflict, violence and HIV and AIDS. Having done an extensive literature review, and analyzed data from fieldwork in different African countries, the authors present some detailed and valuable information for the understanding of masculinities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Some of these include the fact that there is no single or static kind of masculinity in Africa. Rather, there are many versions of masculinities. These different masculinities are socially constructed, fluid, and capable of change over time and in different contexts. There are also versions of masculinities such as rural and urban, masculinities associated with specific ethnic groups, war, etc. There are also new expressions of masculinities which are influenced by the west, Christianity and Islam in Africa (Barker and Ricardo, 2005:4-9).

Barker and Ricardo further note that the most important requirement in many African societies for becoming a man is to attain a level of financial freedom (get a job) and be able to start a family (Barker and Ricardo, 2005:5-8). While this is true, it would seem that “financial freedom” would have different implications in different settings. While it could mean getting a job in some African urban settings, in some rural settings it may imply possession of land for farming or a herd of cattle, for instance. Other important factors in the socialization of men and the understanding and development of masculinities in Africa include rites of passage or initiation practices, which in many African societies also include circumcision and sexual experience (Barker and Ricardo, 2005:9-23).

For a proper understanding of African men and their socialization, social change, urbanization and the political happenings in the continent need to be taken into consideration (Barker and Ricardo, 2005:9-23). The authors also highlight certain alternatives to dangerous versions of masculinities, expressed by their respondents, in some communities and in some aspects of traditional socialization that promote gender equality and positive attitudes in gender relations. An example is their reference to rites of passage used as social control in a positive way and rites that take seriously some new ideas and information, such as the protective use of condoms. These yield more productive and less harmful results for young men in the construction of African masculinities (Barker and Ricardo, 2005:51-54).

It should be noted that Barker and Ricardo (2005), like other authors, either tend to use “manhood” and “masculinity” interchangeably or do not make a clear distinction between the two terms. This is one distinguishing element of the edited volume by Miescher and Lindsay (2003). The contributors in this book engaged masculinities with the socioeconomic and cultural transformation of Africa, in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. However, a clear distinction is made between “manhood” and “masculinity”. They argue that on the one hand, the term “manhood” represents indigenous notions and understandings that are associated or tied to men’s “physiology”. “Masculinities”, on the other hand, represents a “broader and more abstract concept” (Miescher and Lindsay, 2003:5). In other words, masculinities go beyond men’s bodies or physiology (manhood) in the sense that it can include masculine expressions by females, “female masculinities” (Miescher and Lindsay, 2003:5).

The approach of Ratele (2008a) to masculinities is quite interesting as it brings in dimensions not commonly found in other works on the same subject. He affirms some of the features of masculinities already discussed but goes on to highlight the idea that African masculinities are not consistent internally; and that masculinities are not only produced socially but psychologically as well. He acknowledges the existence of agency, in the sense that the production of masculinities involves some active participation by individual males. Males sometimes choose what kind of masculinity they perform due to socio-economic factors or the images of specific masculinities they have been presented with. Age also contributes to the construction of masculinities in terms of promoting it or of being a limitation. And this

enhancing or limiting character of age makes masculinities in Africa internally fragmented, weak and “all performance but nothing” (Ratele 2008a:528; cf. Barker and Ricardo, 2005:16, 25). He concludes that in order to properly engage issues of masculinities in Africa, the connection between the social-psychological experience of being male and the socio-economic and political realities of Africa have to be taken seriously (Ratele 2008a:533).

2.5. MASCULINITIES DISCOURSE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Robert Morrell is an outstanding scholar in the study of men and masculinities in Africa, especially Southern Africa. His works have made valuable contributions to the field as a whole (Connell, 2005b:xv). Morrell’s edited book, *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (2001), has been described by Chitando and Chirogoma (2012:5) as one of the first publications that treated issues of (African) men and masculinities in detail. Morrell explores, amongst other things, the history and politics of masculinities in terms of the responses of South African men to political and economic changes as well as changes in gender relations. While he described some of these responses as “defensive” others were “accommodating” and “responsive or progressive” (Morrell, 2001:28-34).

Morrell (1998, 2001) displays optimism in his questioning of approaches to gender that merely see men as standing in the way of positive change and gender justice. He argues that the fact that masculinities are multiple and fluid means that men can also be a part of positive change. He also shows that the nature of masculinities means that it can be conceptualized differently, in a way that allows for interventions that promote and produce peaceful and harmonious masculinities (Elliot, 2003:8). Thus, he enjoined men to challenge masculinities that are destructive (Elliot, 2003:8). Like other scholars, he pictures a “new man”, a reformed man with certain positive features that are opposed to dangerous forms of masculinities: “introspective, caring, anxious, outspoken on women’s rights, and domestically responsible. The ‘new man’ also turns his back on competitive sports, sexist jokes, (and) violent outdoor pursuits” (Morrell, 1998, cited in Elliot, 2003:7).

The idea behind this is the need for alternatives to harmful masculinities. Men as well as women and structures that support harmful masculinities do need to be challenged. But men also need

alternatives to masculinities that are dominant and exploitative, as represented in models like Morrell's "new man" (Elliot, 2003:16). This belief in the changeability of men and concern for alternatives also characterize the Christian theological discourse on masculinities, especially in Southern Africa as the next section will show. This concern from the theological perspective emphasizes and utilizes particularly issues of religion, culture, and religious resources.

2.6. THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ON MASCULINITIES

Chitando and Chirongoma (2012:13) noted about African discourse on masculinities that the place of religion has not been accorded the attention it deserves. While this is true, I wish to briefly outline here certain theological studies on masculinities. Masculinities have been studied by Biblical scholars in terms of their construction in the Bible (Old and New Testaments) and among the people from whom and within whose cultures and contexts the Bible is historically situated. Examples of these writings include the collections of articles in the book *Men and Masculinities in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond* (Ovidu Creanga, 2010) and those in *New Testament Masculinities* (Moore and Anderson, 2003).

Part of the contributions that can be drawn from these writings is that they help in the understanding of masculinity as fluid and unstable and as something that has to be continually performed and reinstated in order to avoid slipping back to perceived lower levels of existence such as subordinate forms of being man, women, animals or slaves (Moore, 2010; Hoffner, 1966). This should be understood against the background of the hierarchical, complex and not so clear social stratification of the Greco-Roman world as can be drawn from these authors (Moore, 2010; Hoffner, 1966). In this system, broadly speaking, free-born males could be seen as placed at the top of the hierarchy as the most dominant group; followed by subordinate men, which includes other male citizens with no dominating power; then women; children of free-born parents; and the class of slaves, within which there is also a hierarchy.

Furthermore, writers on Bible masculinities also present instances where traditional notions of masculinities were challenged or rejected by figures like Joshua⁸ (Creanga, 2010), Paul (Larson,

⁸ Joshua is the Biblical figure who took over the leadership of the Israelites after the death of Moses their leader, and brought the works of Moses to completion by leading the Israelites to the land promised them by God (Joshua, 1). Paul is a well-known Christian figure with whom the books that account for a large part of the New Testament

2004) and Matthew, in his portrayal of Jesus (Moore and Anderson, 2003). Although they acted within their context and sometimes subscribed to the dominant notion of masculinities, these figures challenge certain aspects of these constructions by presenting what might be considered weaknesses as the actual strength. For instance, Paul's attitude towards the traditional notion of autonomy demonstrates a rejection of its understanding as the ability of a "real man" not to relinquish his power or authority to others, an act acceptable only for slaves and women (Larson, 2004:91, 93). Paul's choosing to work for his living rather than take from his congregation could be one of Paul's ways of rejecting this traditional understanding of personal autonomy and freedom as a necessary component of masculinity. This is because in the tradition of his time, working for someone is submissiveness, and something women and slaves do, not men (Larson, 2004:93).

These kinds of writings on masculinities which derive from the Bible and Biblical interpretation, as shall be seen in chapter four, characterize the works of Gerald West. But his works, like those of the other two analyzed in this thesis (Ezra Chitando and Adrian Van Klinken), focuses more on contemporary African masculinities, not on the Greco-Roman world. Their writings also reflect one of the key roots of religious discourses on masculinities in African scholarship, namely, the Circle of Concerned African Theologians.⁹

It has been observed that due to this history, African theological scholarship on masculinities tends to be done within the Circle's tradition and framework. Adriaan van Klinken (2011; 2013) makes this assertion from a critical perspective which is discussed in chapter five. By this he refers to the tradition among Circle members to use the notion of patriarchy, most often simply narrowed down to male dominance and subordination of women, as a framework for understanding and critiquing gender relations and masculinity. This is linked to the pursuit of a theologized ideal of gender justice which serves as the goal for their efforts to transform

(letters) are associated. Having persecuted Christians for some time, Paul is reported to have had an encounter with Jesus that changed him into an Apostle of Jesus (Acts, 9) and a promoter of Christianity (Awwad, 2011:3-14). Jennifer Larson examines his masculinity in relation to his response to accusations raised against him by critics, who accused him, amongst other things, of being weak and inconsistent in ways that undermine his position and person as a man and leader (Larson, 2004). The name Matthew, notwithstanding the debates about the authorship of Bible books like Matthew, is used here to refer to the author of the first book of the New Testament, also known as Matthew, as used in the works referred to in this section (Moore and Anderson, 2003).

⁹ See section on background to this study chapter one.

patriarchal gender relations (and masculinities) into life-promoting forms (van Klinken, 2011a:111). The theology of gender justice which also serves as the theoretical framework for this thesis¹⁰ is discussed in more detail in the next section which reviews the dominant theories in the study of men and masculinities.

2.7. THEORIES OF MASCULINITIES

Masculinities are most commonly theorized within three models that are used in thinking about gender – the broader system within which masculinity is commonly discussed. The first model is the biological theory (or biological determinism). Using this lens, masculinity is seen as an external way of portraying what it means to be biologically male. Thus, being a ‘man’ is equivalent to the biological male sex, and having features associated with males biologically, such as a penis, testosterone, Y chromosomes, particular male genetic configurations, amongst other things (Robertson, 2010:1-2). Based on this point of view, behaviors associated with males are seen as determined by biology. Connell (2004) discusses this approach in a broader model that she calls the “categorical” theory, which sees men and women as categories that have been predetermined or predefined. In other words, approaches to gender within this model, whether explicitly or not, see biological differences between males and females as the all-encompassing explanation for gendered behavior. Described either as categorical or biological, this theory has increasingly become unpopular and highly discredited for its inability to explain certain complexities of gender. Such complexities include violence within any of either “men” (example: heterosexual men against gay men) or “women” (heterosexual women against lesbians), as gender categories. It also does not appropriately address the relations between gender – masculinities – and other realities like race and class (Connell, 2004).

The second common way of thinking about masculinities is by using the sex-role theory. This arose from efforts to exploit better ways of understanding gendered human behavior given the inadequacy of biological determinism (Robertson, 2008:2). The sex-role approach assumes the existence of norms and customs that outline expected, appropriate and acceptable behavior of members of society based on gender (Robertson, 2008:2). As children grow, they learn, rehearse, and perform their roles as dictated by their society. This is how boys grow to learn what is

¹⁰ In chapter one I provided some clarity on the meanings attached to my usage of this theology of gender justice as a framework.

expected of a man from their parents, teachers, mates and peer groups, the media, etc. They are also pressured into performing these behaviours with explicit or non-explicit rewards for conformity and sanctions for non-conformity (Robertson, 2008:2; Connell, 2004).

Sex role theory has also been found wanting in various respects (Robertson, 2008:3; Connell, 2004). Even though it provides insights into some issues of gender, the theory is said to present a poor understanding of change by presenting men as “empty vessels” when they are born only to be socialized into certain ways of living. It also does not explain the fluctuating power relations that exist among men and women and presents rigid ways of understanding gender and sex differences, amongst other things (Robertson, 2008:3; Connell, 2004).

The third model for understanding masculinities is the relational model. To a large extent, this model is influenced by the works of Raewyn Connell, whose influence on the field of masculinities has been discussed in section 2.3 above. Relational theory sees gender as having to do with sets of relationships that make up what can be called a gender order. These relationships are between men and women on the one hand, and between men as a category and between women as another category, on the other hand. Masculinities are to be understood within this gender order. Thus, masculinities are better seen as configurations of innovative and creative social gender practices associated with men within this gender order (Robertson, 2008:4; Connell, 2004). This approach has been described as the most plausible way of understanding men and masculinities scientifically (Connell, 2004).

Theories of masculinities can also be broadly categorized into essentialist and social constructionist approaches. Essentialist approaches would include both the sex-role theory and biological determinism discussed earlier in this section. Beasley (2012), in doing an examination of the theorizing associated with men and masculinities, identified what he called the “five main theoretical directions” (Beasley, 2012:749). One of these theoretical directions is “Social Constructionism” (upper case) within which he believes most scholarship on men and masculinities tends to reside. Social Constructionism he sees as a form of weak modernism, which involves modernist thinkers in the field of gender and sexuality studies. Power, in this line of thinking, is understood in terms of social structures. This includes a tendency to see power and

structures in a more negative sense, especially in the context of oppression (Beasley, 2012:749). In this line of thought, identities are perceived to be formed as a result of the way power is socially structured, and identities are historically and socially specific, varied and complex. This position, according to Beasley (2012:750), is a bit different from social constructionism (lower case) which tends to emphasize “unlimited fluidity per se” (Beasley, 2012:750). The latter he considers to be characterized basically by a wide range of anti-essentialist positions covering different kinds of approaches (Beasley, 2012:750).

The work of Raewyn Connell, Beasley argues, is a typical example of theorizing masculinities within Social Constructionism/weak modernism (2012:750). And the fact that most theoretical analysis, thinking and studies on men and masculinities in all disciplines make use of Connell’s works and concepts (Wedgwood, 2009:329; Beasley, 2012:750) explains why many of these writings use a Social Constructionist approach. Connell’s contribution to the studies of masculinities is agreed to be unmatched by any other as she remains the key point of reference for writers on masculinities (Beasley, 2012:751). Although much has been said about Connell so far, it is important to stress here that one important aspect of Connell’s theory is how she was able to reconcile structure with agency. Thus, she notes that while social structures “do” gender (masculinities) to us, we also “do” gender as agents (Beasley, 2012:757).

African and non-African writers on masculinities do not usually make a distinction between Social Constructionism and social constructionism (upper and lower case) as Beasley (2012) has done. They generally speak of masculinities as socially constructed. And being socially constructed generally implies that masculinities are historically produced, inherited in many cases, produced by certain social forces and perceptions, exist by virtue of interaction and have roots in and are grounded by culture, religion, institutional practices, and behavior. In addition, masculinities are also diverse, fluid and heterogeneous (Ratele 2008a; Morrell 2001; Barker and Ricardo 2005; Ratele 2008b; Beynon 2002; Morrell, 1998).

Although the key theorist Connell is also social constructionist in this general sense, she is different in her emphasis on the physical body and its dimensions in the construction and performance of masculinities and gender generally (Connell, 2005b:52-71; Creanga, 2010:85).

Kopano Ratele (2008a) seems a bit different too in his suggestion that masculinities are not only socially but also psychologically constructed. And that it is only when viewed in this way that masculinities in Africa will be properly understood, as discussed above (Ratele, 2008a:533).

2.7.1. Theology of Gender Justice

The notion of gender justice is widely used, and usually presumes the existence of gender inequality which is considered the most pervasive form of inequality in the world (Valji, 2007:3). Gender justice has been defined as the “Protection and promotion of civil, political, economic and social rights on the basis of gender equality” (Spees, 2004:9). This would involve the assessment of not only these rights themselves, but also accessibility and impediments to their enjoyment by everyone, male and female, as well as protecting them in ways that are gender-sensitive (Spees, 2004:9). For Morrell, gender justice is the resistance of “the gender prejudices, misogyny and homophobia inherent in the dominant masculinity.... Gender justice is against all discrimination based on gender” (Morrell, 1998a:8).

From a theological perspective, and specifically from an understanding of the mission of the church, Namsoon Kang (2005) argues that the demand for gender justice is rooted in Christianity itself as God historically sides with, and acts for, those who are oppressed, marginalized or suffer any form of unjust deprivation (Kang 2005:286). The understanding of justice for this author is based on Harrison’s definition of justice as “rightly ordered relationships of mutuality within the total web of our several relations” (1985:253 quoted in Kang 2005:286).

Kang further elaborates that justice has its root in the character of God itself, as a feature of God’s character. She argues that justice is portrayed in the Bible as springing from God, who is a God of justice. “Human searching” did not bring about justice, it was only found through “divine revelation”. However, it is the “duty of humanity under God, and is the demand of God” (Kang, 2005:286). Kang holds that even though defining justice may not be an easy task, it is evident in the Bible that it has to do with “a concern for the weak against power and privilege” (Kang 2005:287) and the mission of the church is to extend this character of God by demanding for, and promoting justice and equality within and outside the church (Kang 2005:289).

Arguing in the same vein, Isabel Phiri says that the role of the church is to carry out God's mission as an instrument of God. However, because God has been understood by patriarchy as one who creates social hierarchy, women have experienced alienation and have been discriminated against in the church, which is an obstacle to the Church's mission (Phiri, 2002:79). It follows that gender justice can only be experienced in the African church if the ways in which men and women have been represented within and outside the church are radically changed. Because

Gender justice means promoting the humanity of both women and men in the church and using their gifts as revealed by God. Any form of discrimination and oppression mars the image of God in creation and humanity for God is a God of justice and the practice of Christianity is supposed to reflect the justice of God (Phiri, 2002:79).

She further argues that Jesus' actions exemplified the justice of God because he took the side of those who are oppressed and brought liberation to those who are weak against those who are privileged and the powerful. And since by virtue of patriarchy women have been denied right relationships, which makes them part of the oppressed, God's justice in the relationship between males and females would mean "liberation from all forms of oppression and promotion of responsibility, mutuality and acceptance of one's duties towards oneself and others" (Phiri, 2002:82). This understanding as I have discussed in the last chapter, influences the understanding of the theology of gender justice that theoretically frames this study. It also informs the call for transformation of masculinities, especially by members of the Circle and African theologians.

From this perspective, this theology shares a broader concern for the transformation of society in all aspects. This is also visible in the activism of members of the Circle as they explore religious and cultural resources that are life-promoting and employ them in their change-targeted activities (Phiri and Nadar, 2010:96). And according to Phiri and Nadar (2010:96) such concerns for transformation of societies qualify the theologies of African women to be regarded as liberation theology. This is because liberation theology is about creating awareness amongst people of their oppression as a way of bringing about change (Oduyoye, 2001:16).

2.8. CONCLUSION

This chapter attempted to present a detailed background to the study in terms of literature, theories, development and current state of the field of masculinities. I began by examining the efforts to reclaim the true meaning of the term “gender” from a narrow understanding that equates it to women. This was followed by a review of the emergence of the scholarship on masculinities and related key issues from a western perspective, and then in Africa. Beginning with an examination of Biblical scholarship, the theological discourses on masculinities was reviewed. The dominant theorizing in the field of masculinities were discussed, which led to a focus on the theology of gender justice as a theory.

One thing that is clear from the literature reviewed in this chapter is the growing trend and popularity of the field of African masculinities. Just like the concept itself, the field is changing, and diversified. Although there is engagement with literature from different contexts which helps to shape thinking and the understanding of issues of masculinities in specific contexts, each context still maintains its uniqueness in terms of the elements that constitute masculinities and how they are constructed. While these differences are very crucial, similarities too need to be acknowledged, which allows for the construction and some level of application of theories developed in one place to a different one. These elements of differences and similarities will be noticed in the next three chapters where I examine selected works of Ezra Chitando, Gerald West and Adrian van Klinken respectively.

AFRICAN MASCULINITIES IN THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF EZRA CHITANDO

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter addressed the need to situate Chitando, West and van Klinken's writings on masculinities within the disciplinary and theoretical context of the study of men and masculinities in Africa. This was done by presenting a picture of the development and issues in the study of masculinities. In this chapter, I now focus on each of the scholars in the ensuing chapters beginning with Professor Ezra Chitando. I start with a basic introduction and background on Chitando which includes, briefly, his writing context and his inferred theological framework. I then present an analysis of his writings on African masculinities, using the thematic networks figure and a description and discussion on the themes represented in the figure. This will lead to an evaluation section where I engage critical issues that emerge from my interpretation and analysis which are not covered in the other sections of the chapter.

3.2. EZRA CHITANDO

Ezra Chitando is a religious studies professor at the University of Zimbabwe. He also works for the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAlA) as a theology consultant. Although Chitando writes on other issues, his primary focus includes HIV and AIDS, and sometimes gender-based violence (GBV). His writings about the epidemic in Africa are mostly around the church's responsibility in the HIV era.¹¹ Thus, HIV and AIDS and GBV in Africa could be regarded as the major context within which the author seeks to explore other issues which his works seek to address.¹² With regards to the subject of masculinities in religious/theological discourse, Chitando has been described as one who has done pioneering or groundbreaking work (van Klinken, 2011a:111). His works on masculinities address a number of issues, but also carry a background interest in producing men who are responsible in the era of

¹¹ Basic profile information from <http://ecumenicalwomen.org/advocacy/csw-2009/orientation-schedule-2009/biographies-of-panelists/> and <http://www.zoominfo.com/p/Ezra-Chitando/1112841651> (retrieved 12/10/13).

¹² See for instance, Chitando, E. 2007. *Acting in Hope: African Churches and HIV/AIDS*; Chitando, E. 2007. *Troubled but not Destroyed: African Theology in Dialogue with HIV and AIDS*; and *Living with Hope: African Churches and HIV/AIDS*. All WCC Publications, Geneva 2.

HIV and AIDS. While this is important, my analysis will not focus on HIV and AIDS or GBV per se as this may derail the goal of the study. While reference to these issues will be made where relevant, the goal would be to draw out and analyse themes on African masculinities in relation to gender justice as guided by the objectives and theoretical framework of the study.

Based on the literature examined in this study, Ezra Chitando does not explicitly identify with or describe his work as belonging to any particular kind of theology. Thus, I only infer here that his writings, if they have to fall under any theological categorization, would appropriately fit into a (pro-feminist) liberation theology¹³, with particular bias towards African women's theology. My claim is based on three reasons. First, his writings subscribe to the ideology usually associated with men who support feminism and who are commonly referred to as "pro-feminists". Some of the key features of this ideology include: being familiar with critiques of feminism against male domination, willingness, desire and effort to bring about change to these unequal power relations and to male behaviour (Cowburn, 2007:280). Second, Chitando works closely with the Circle,¹⁴ and his writings following their tradition, share their concern for individual and social transformation in a way that is non-tolerant towards patriarchy. He also tends to advance such concerns with specific focus on men.¹⁵ Third, if such concerns allow African women's theologies to fit into liberation theologies, as Phiri and Nadar (2010: 96) argue, then the writings of Chitando can also fit into liberation theologies as a broad category.

3.3. DEDUCED THEMES IN THE WRITINGS OF E. CHITANDO ON AFRICAN MASCULINITIES

Given this background on Chitando, I now focus on the themes that emerge from his writings on African masculinities. The organization of the networks and its advantages have been discussed in the methodology section in chapter one. I wish here to mention that the basic themes which are the lowest-level themes sometimes are basic ideas or statements extracted or formulated from

¹³ Liberation theologies constitute a wide range of theologies that address many different issues, however, the common denominator would be its focus on the social order and how it denies the humanness to the poor, the marginalized, the exploited, and how God can be proclaimed in a world that is largely inhuman (Gutierrez, 1999:24-26)..

¹⁴ His profile on <http://ecumenicalwomen.org/advocacy/csw-2009/orientation-schedule-2009/biographies-of-panelists/> (12/1013).

¹⁵ For example, Chitando, E. & Hadebe, N. 2009. (eds.) *Compassionate Circles: African Women Theologians Facing HIV*; and Chitando, E. 2007. *Troubled but not Destroyed: African Theology in Dialogue with HIV and AIDS*. WCC Publications, Geneva 2.

the texts. And as Figure 2 below demonstrates, the principles or broader themes and ideas around which the basic themes are formed are represented as mid-level organizing themes. They serve as a channel through which the global theme is arrived at. The global theme is the major claim, position or conclusion that emerges in the writings of the scholar. It is represented in the middle of the diagram (Figure 2). It should be noted that apart from the portrayal of how the basic ideas are organized through to the main claim, there is no hierarchy in the structure, and it also allows for fluidity of ideas (Attride-Stirling, 2001:389). My discussion concentrates on the organizing (mid-level) themes and within them, the basic themes, and then the global theme.

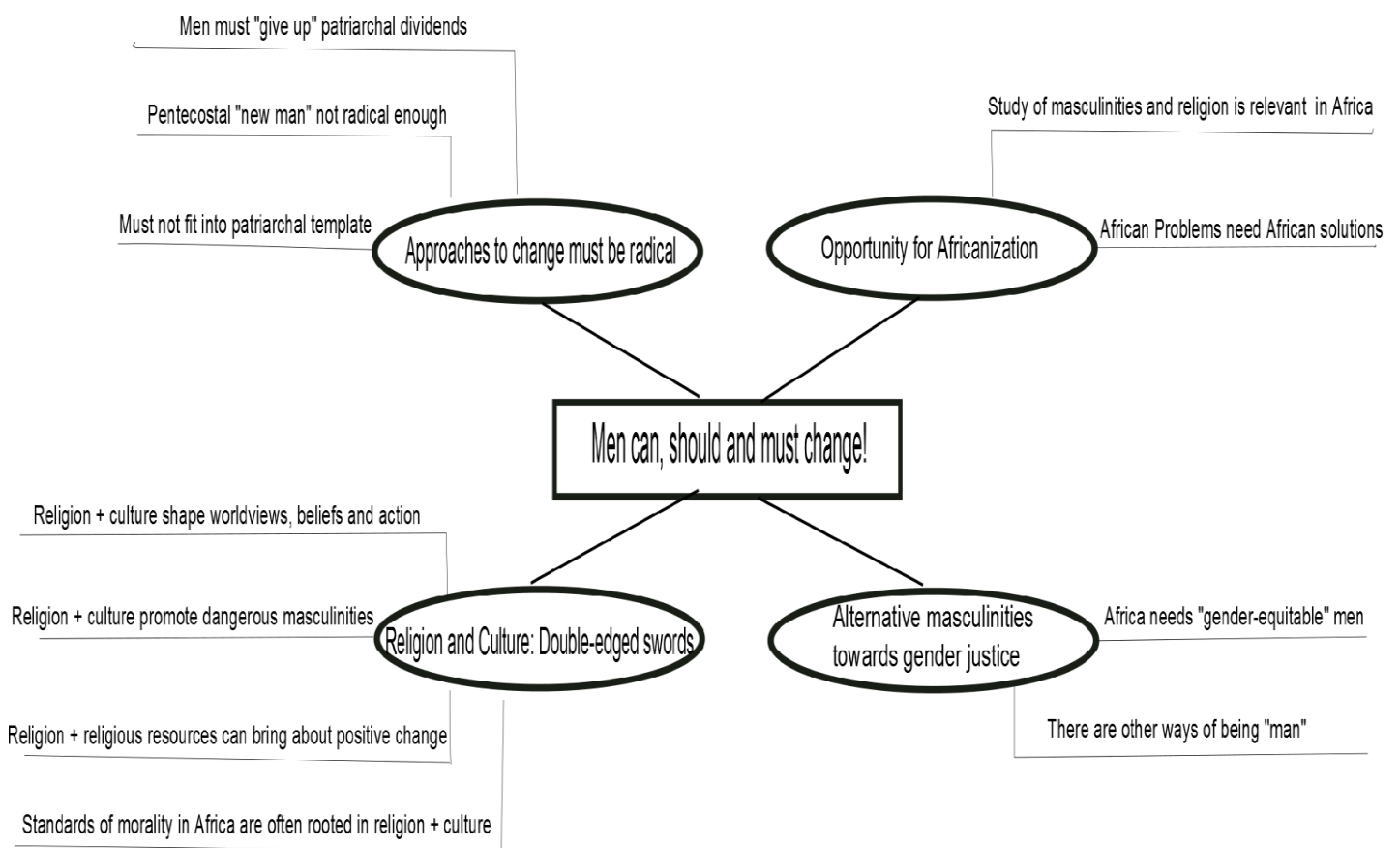


Figure 2: Thematic Networks of deduced themes in the writings of E. Chitando on African masculinities. The structure is guided by Attride-Stirling (2001:388).

As represented in the diagram, the global theme I drew from the works of Ezra Chitando is that “Men can, should and must change!”¹⁶ This is developed through four organizing themes. I shall discuss each of these four themes before focusing on the global theme.

3.3.1. Religion and Masculinities as Opportunity for Africanization

The term “Africanization” captures both an ideology and a movement, especially among scholars in Africa who care about a broad range of issues relating, but not limited to, affirmation and (re)definition of African cultures and identities in a global context. Africanization involves the interpretation, upholding and approaching epistemology in a way that responds appropriately to the unique African experience and identities (Louw, 2010:42-43; Kistner, 2008:92-93). This seems to rest on a premise that the current reality or representation of Africa does not actually capture the essence of African realities, identities and cultures. It follows then that Africanization is an active call to Africans (Okeke, 2010:42). Those who respond to this call have sought to explore possible opportunities to bring about some level of Africanization. It is against this background that Chitando presents the emerging field of masculinities in religious discourse as one such opportunity for Africanization.

This would mean that the study of religion and masculinities presents an opportunity to reflect on African issues, utilize African resources and methodologies, and come up with African modeled solutions to African problems (Chitando, 2013:666-667). It would be misleading to think of Chitando’s position here as merely a call for scholarly engagement with issues of masculinities. Chitando is actually critical of any such engagements that do not have practical relevance in addressing real life problems of Africans such as HIV and AIDS and GBV (Chitando, 2008:67). Thus, any Africanization effort in relation to religion and masculinities will only be relevant if it holds some transformational value. It should, for instance, contribute towards bringing about change in men in a way that makes them more caring and responsible in relation to issues like HIV and AIDS and GBV. And for Chitando, it is important too that such change be approached radically.

¹⁶ The exclamation mark is meant to portray the claim more as an outcry, with some emotion and to hint at the radical nature of Chitando’s approach to issues of men and masculinities.

3.3.2. Radical Approach to Change in Relation to Masculinities

The style and tone of the writings of Chitando on masculinities are consistent with the actual content in terms of radicalism. He consistently challenges men, for instance, to “give up” “patriarchal privileges” or “patriarchal dividends” (Chitando, 2010:29-30; 2008:66). These are privileges they enjoy simply because they are men (Ditz, 2004:2) and which they must “give up” because they are oppressive to women and children. This displays a lack of tolerance for patriarchy and its ideals and values, which as stated in section 3.2 above follows in the tradition of African women theologians, especially members of the Circle. This lack of tolerance for patriarchy is clearly displayed in his assessment of Pentecostal efforts to produce “new men” in Zimbabwe.

In his study of Pentecostals in Zimbabwe, Chitando (2007) provides details on how these Pentecostals work at transforming men into “new men” who are non-violent, respectful, caring, self-controlled, adhere to Christian principles and uphold Christian values. If the Pentecostal churches actually produce such “new men”, they would have recorded a huge, and satisfactory level of success. I say this, because the “new men” would now represent the opposite of dominant forms of masculinities which are oppressive, violent, uncaring, etc. Curiously however, Chitando does not consider this to be radical enough. He argues that while their efforts are commendable, a more radical approach is needed which is not fitted within a patriarchal template that promotes the “paradigm of male as the leader” (Chitando, 2007:122). In other words, for transformation to be more acceptable, it must go beyond patriarchy and related ideas such as men as heads or leaders.

This position of Chitando is also held by other African theologians (particularly, members of the Circle) and has been duly critiqued by van Klinken (2012b:360) who argues that it blinds them to the fact that transformation of masculinities can and do actually take place within patriarchy. The “new men” Chitando acknowledges for instance were actually made possible through the utilization of patriarchal notions like “male headship” and “male leadership” (van Klinken, 2012a:229). I agree with van Klinken on this observation, and share his concern for an approach that is not blind to transformations that are taking place within the patriarchal paradigm. However, I think Chitando’s dissatisfaction with the Pentecostal kind of transformation of

masculinities holds some value because it can guard against an attitude of complacency when more can be achieved in opening up more opportunities for women to exercise their leadership capacities. For instance, it is possible for men to be more responsible and caring to their wives, yet confine them in the homes and to the backseats in public.

3.3.3. Religion (and Culture): Double-edged Swords

The example of Pentecostal engagement with issues of masculinities in Zimbabwe already hints at the issue of religion which together with culture occupies a significant place in the works of Chitando. Religion (and culture) is presented in a way that I find best to capture with the expression “double-edged swords” in relation to masculinities, gender and patriarchy (Chitando, 2012:17). In other words, it is potentially or actually constructive and destructive at the same time. On the one hand, religion and culture are major contributors to the development of dangerous masculinities both in their nature and structure as well as in the ways they have been used. They have, for instance, promoted, sustained and justified patriarchal structures (Chitando, 2010:29). They have also promoted ideals like headship and leadership as exclusive to men to whom women and children are subjects (Chitando, 2013:665). Religion is able to achieve this or be used in this way because the worldviews, beliefs, standards of morality and even actions are shaped by religion (Chitando, 2013:665). This resonates with the position of ter Haar and Ellis that “it is largely through religious ideas that Africans think about the world today, and that religious ideas provide them with a means of becoming social and political actors” (ter Haar and Ellis, 2004:2). Although their concern was with the relations between religion and politics in Africa, this assertion sheds more light on Chitando’s exposition of the importance of religion in issues of construction of masculinities in Africa.

On the other hand, the same religion that contributes in the production of dangerous masculinities can also be utilized in the transformation of such masculinities into life promoting and harmless alternative ways of being “men” (Chitando and Chirongoma, 2012:17). This idea is clearer in Chitando’s discussions on the theme of religious resources. In line with what has been said about religion in the preceding paragraph, men have used such religious and cultural resources as “ancestral tradition”, doctrines, and sacred texts such as stories of masculine figures

in the Bible to maintain dominance and sustain their patriarchal privileges (Chitando and Chirongoma, 2012:3).

In the same vein, Chitando holds that such resources as the Bible can be used to produce alternative masculinities that are not harmful. He holds that men need to engage differently with the Bible, with open minds and willingness to discover new masculinities and to challenge dangerous ones (Chitando, 2010:29). Jesus, for instance, is said to have wept (John, 11:35). This can be used to debunk the idea that crying makes one less a man (Chitando, 2012:263). The concern of Chitando for production of alternative masculinities which runs through the themes that have been discussed so far raises important questions: what precisely would constitute such alternatives and to what specific end, other than the fact that dominant masculinities are harmful to women and children and to men in some cases?

3.3.4. Alternative Masculinities towards Gender Justice

In the works of Chitando, terms like transformative, liberating, and redemptive masculinities are recurrent. They are used more frequently as alternatives to dangerous and harmful masculinities, ideologies and practices of men. But what exactly do these terms mean and what kind of masculinities are they intended to portray? I found some clarity in the introduction to the book *Redemptive Masculinities* (2012), edited by Chitando and Chirongoma. “Transformative masculinities” is explained to connote an undertaking to produce masculinities that can transform the world into a gender equitable one. “Liberating Masculinities” implies masculinities that are freeing masculinities as well as masculinities that are capable of freeing men from the negativity that characterizes them in many places. The term “Redemptive masculinities” is said to distinguish masculinities that promote or give life in the face of violence and AIDS. Moreover, it takes seriously the place of religion, theology, and religio-cultural resources, and “evokes the spiritual dimension” in the reconstruction of alternative masculinities (Chitando and Chirongoma, 2012:2). Clearly, the meanings of these concepts overlap. What I can convincingly say about them based on my reading of Chitando’s work is that they are presented as positive, peaceful and life-enhancing alternatives (Chitando, 2008b:56). This probably justifies his use of the concepts interchangeably. But it still leaves us with the question; what does such a redemptive or life-giving masculinities look like?

The answer to this question is most probably captured in the image of “gender-equitable” men presented in *Redemptive Masculinities* (2012:26 citing Pulerwitz et al, 2006:6-7). Such men:

Are respectful to women, show concern about the feelings and opinions of their sexual partners, and seek relationships based on equality and intimacy rather than on sexual conquest; Believe that men and women have equal rights; Assume, or share with their partners the responsibility for reproductive health and disease prevention issues; Are, or seek to be, involved domestic partners and fathers, who are responsible for at least some of the household chores and their children’s care giving. Are opposed to violence against women in their intimate relationships. Are not homophobic

Note that the vision here is presented more in the context of HIV and GBV. Moreover, it feeds into the notion of gender justice which appears in the writings of Chitando as a goal and an ideal to be achieved (Chitando, 2007b:122). This entails men and women working together to bring about a better society for everyone (Chitando, 2007b:123). And this would be achieved only when men change from negative ways of being men. As observed by van Klinken (2010:6) however, Chitando, like some other theologians, hardly provides a clear definition of what he means by “gender justice”.¹⁷ It is used in connection with notions and ideals like gender equality, partnership, etc (van Klinken, 2010:6-7). At the level of practical application, I would not consider it necessary to draw a line between “gender justice” and other terms like gender equality because ultimately they represent valid ideals that promise better relations among men and women towards a more habitable world, and in a way they overlap. However, I agree with van Klinken that there is need for more clarity at a scholarly level of what precisely constitutes gender justice in the work of Chitando and if, at all, his usage of it carries any significant difference from similar terms like gender equality.

One area that I think requires more clarity or better still, emphasis, in relation to ideals of gender justice and related terminologies is who it is all about: women or both men and women? Chitando emphasizes women and children as those on the receiving end of dangerous masculinities, which is true to an extent because women have suffered most (Valji, 2007; Clifford, 2002), and more so given his dominant context of HIV and GBV. However, the task of transforming masculinities towards gender justice is likely to be interpreted as excluding men in

¹⁷ More detail on van Klinken’s critique of the usage of the notion of gender justice is provided in chapter five.

its focus and giving the impression that although men need to change, it is only for the good of women and children. This could blind readers to the important issues he alludes to: that dangerous masculinities do not harm only women and children but also harm men themselves in many ways. Thus, men themselves stand to benefit from such transformation. They experience freedom, liberation and “heavy loads are lifted from the shoulders of men who no longer subscribe to oppressive masculinities” and who promote gender justice (Chitando, 2012:262). This perspective, important as it is, does not seem to come out strongly in the work of Chitando on masculinities.

3.3.5. Men Can, Should and Must Change!

So far, I have explored the four organizing themes that emerge in the works of Chitando and in and through these themes, the basic themes. Although I try to show some connection in these themes, they do not of necessity follow the order I have discussed them. What is important is that in and through these themes I draw what I consider to be the basic claim of change: that men can change, that they should change and that they must (be helped to) change. This idea of change can be seen running through or implied, if not explicitly mentioned, in the four mid-level themes discussed above in the preceding sections. Thus, though the first theme relates to Africanization, in relation to masculinities it is only relevant if it can bring about change in men. The second theme emphasizes the need for such a change to be radical in nature in order for it to be more effective or acceptable. The third theme buttresses the fact that religion and religious resources can be used to bring about this change. And the fourth theme demonstrates that there are other more life-giving and peaceful ways of being “men” (alternative masculinities), which can lead humanity towards a world where gender justice prevails.

All these themes take the capacity of men to change and even their own involvement (agency) in bringing about this change for granted, or as given. In this sense, change is also a premise on which Chitando builds his discussions on masculinities and not just a conclusion. He argues that “masculinities are not frozen” (Chitando, 2012b:114), men can be transformed, they are capable of “giving up” their patriarchal privileges and they must do so in order for the world to be a better place. This is partly why he decries the “marginalization” of men in efforts to bring about gender justice and says such efforts would be counterproductive (Chitando, 2007a:40;

2013:663). A holistic approach that includes men and women working together is the sure path to gender justice (Chitando and Chirongoma, 2012:3). I wish to state here that the idea of change is not new in the broader discourse on masculinities, which in fact has been more or less about changing men (Morrell, 2001; 1998a; Capraro, 2004). But Chitando is to be appreciated in relation to the religious discourse in Africa where his work is situated.

3.4. CRITICAL EVALUATION

From the foregoing analysis of the works of Ezra Chitando on masculinities, it is clear that he has raised and engaged critical issues around men and masculinities in relation to religion in a bold and provocative manner. His works in this regard are very plausible and very challenging in a way that they do not mince words in exposing the dangers inherent in the patriarchal structures and in dangerous masculinities, especially in terms of their effects on women and children. There is an impressive level of consistency between what he says and advocates for and the tone of his writing. In other words, his activist tone is congruent with his constant call for radical approaches to the transformation of masculinities. Such an approach shows the gravity of the issues he raises, especially when looked at within the context of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and the urgent need to employ all effective approaches to combat the pandemic. His call for partnership towards the realization of gender justice reflects in his apparent co-operation with members of the Circle, whose works feature regularly in his writings.

However, the notion of masculinities in Chitando's works is very closely tied to "males" and "manhood". Thus, masculinities in his understanding seem to be equivalent to "men" as biological males. This poses a problem given the fact that theoretically, masculinities are to be understood more as abstractions, a language or a way of speaking about a phenomenon, which in itself is not concrete. It is true that much of what is constructed and practiced around the idea of masculinities are performed or practiced by males. However, as Connell (2004:4) argues, male bodies should be seen more as points of reference rather than the determinants of the social practice of masculinities. Otherwise, this would tend towards essentialism that ties gender practice strictly to anatomy (Robertson, 2010:1-2). To be sure Chitando does not say that performance of masculinities is determined by biology as biological determinists would hold.¹⁸

¹⁸ Essentialist theories like biological and social determinism have been discussed in details in chapter two.

However, he seems to be leaning towards it with his almost synonymous use of “men” (as males) and “masculinity”.

This further makes it difficult to address expressions of masculinities by non-males such as females, and the fact that gender positions among males and females can change in some cultures (Ratele, 2008b:525). In fact Miescher and Lindsay note that in Africa, research shows that there can be “masculinity without men”, and that this can be “ordinary and part of accepted gender experience” where women can attain or hold positions and characteristics that are usually reserved for men, and would be perceived and related to as “men”, not in the biological sense but in terms of gender construct and practice (Miescher and Lindsay, 2003:5). In recognition of this, they use the notion of “manhood” to denote “indigenous notions explicitly related to men’s physiology” and “masculinities” to denote a more encompassing and abstract concept which is not necessarily tied to men’s physiology or bodies (Miescher and Lindsay, 2003:5). Of course, one can raise a number of questions regarding this form of masculinities but suffice it here that it brings to our attention the importance of giving some attention to the relations between “maleness” (biological) and “masculinity” (construct and social performance).

Chitando also makes references to gender as socially constructed (Chitando, 2008b:58) in a way that almost slips into the essentialist view of social determinism. This is reflected in his usage of terms like social or gender roles (Chitando, 2007b:124). On one occasion he actually defined gender as “the socially prescribed roles for men and women” (Chitando, 2013:664). This is a very limiting way to engage with masculinities and gender generally, especially with the growing tendency to move away from any form of determinism in discussing masculinities due to their inadequacy.¹⁹ Moreover, it has been argued that human bodies or minds are not just blank boards on which society writes masculinities (Ratele, 2008b:533 Connell, 2005b: 52-64). Inasmuch as masculinities are socially constructed, individuals are also agents of practice and also play a part in the construction of masculinities and gender. Thus, society must not be approached as though it is independent of the individual actors in it. It is interesting and somehow contradictory that Chitando actually acknowledges agency in the practice of gender. As I have argued, the notion of change comes across as both premise and the center of his major claim or theme on

¹⁹ Details in chapter two.

masculinities. But change presupposes agency if the term is to be understood in relation to the capacity of persons to be actors within social structures (Hiltin and Elder, 2007:170-171). It follows that people cannot be required or challenged to change if they do not possess the capacity to do so.

The foregoing seems to suggest that Chitando is more focused on advocacy rather than theory in his writings. This is good but it creates some level of inconsistency between what he advocates for and the theories and conceptual framework on which they are based. If theory can inform practice in the sense that it can help us understand the phenomenon we are dealing with and inform better approaches to problems like dangerous masculinities, I think Chitando needs to strengthen the theoretical basis of his works to be consistent with the change he advocates.

Another concern that emerges from the works of Chitando is regarding the portrayal of men. What images of men emerge from his works and how productive could such images be for his advocacy for change? The picture of men as “perpetrators” is quite strong in the works of Chitando, as captured by statements like “men have imbibed cultural values that threaten the well-being of women and children” (Chitando, 2008b:58). And the constant call on men to “give up” their privileged positions. I agree that patriarchy and its structures hold benefit for all men by virtue of their being men. But as Morrell (1998a:8) observes not all men benefit equally. Some men actually suffer from domination of other men who render them quite powerless. This unequal relation among men is also what Connell (2005b:77) attempts to address with her categorization of masculinities into hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalized.

While “hegemonic masculinities” does appear in the works of Chitando, he does not give adequate attention to the unequal gender relations among men which I think can influence the way his radical call for “giving up” patriarchal dividends will be received. To be sure, being “men” gives men access to the patriarchal privilege and the power to choose to use it to dominate women, but also whether to dominate other men (Ouzegane and Morrell, 2001:7). The experience of Michael A. Messner, although in a different context (and old?), might be quite instructive here:

at one of the first National Conferences on Men and Masculinity, I sat with several hundred people and listened to a radical feminist male exhort all of us to “renounce masculinity” and “give up all our male privileges” as we unite with women to work for a just and egalitarian world. Shortly after this moving speech, a black man stood up and angrily shouted, “when you ask me to give up my privileges as a man, you are asking me to give up something that white America has never allowed me in the first place! I’ve never been allowed to be a man in this racist society”.... Another man stood up and said, “Yea – I feel the same way as a gay man. My struggle is not to learn how to cry and hug other men. That’s what you straight guys are all hung up on. I am oppressed in this homophobic society and need to empower myself to fight that oppression, I can’t relate to your guilt-tripping us all into giving up our power. What power?” (Messner, 1997:7).

This does not only show how counterproductive an approach that takes men’s power for granted can be, it attests to the diversity of masculinities and its inherent complications. Such factors, I believe, need to be taken into consideration for a more effective approach to change.

Moreover, the effects of masculinities and patriarchy on men themselves need more emphasis as I have noted earlier. If due to patriarchy men do prefer and use all in their power to maintain subordination of women, as it would seem in Chitando’s writings, why would they then want to give up their patriarchal privileges simply because of women and children? I think it is important to emphasize too the fact that patriarchy and dangerous masculinities are very costly to men themselves in many ways, be it in terms of poor health, early deaths, poor and unfulfilling relationships, etc (Messner, 1997:6).

3.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on Ezra Chitando’s writings on African masculinities. In order to enhance the understanding of his writings, the chapter provided a brief background about him. This included the context of his writings and what might be considered his theological underpinnings if need be. I then provided a relatively detailed analysis of his works using the thematic networks diagram. Each of the organizing themes in the diagram was discussed in a way that led me to what I consider his major claim, which has to do with men’s ability and need to change. The section that followed looked more critically at the themes that emerged and attempted to raise a number of issues that required further examination. Apparent in my analysis is the fact that although there are issues that could render his approach problematic, Chitando does contribute to

the understanding of men and masculinity in Africa and the need for change. This is more so within the context of HIV and GBV, and in terms of men's responsibility within this context, towards the attainment of gender equality or gender justice. Although Gerald West has a different approach, he can be said to have also made significant contributions too as the examination of his writings in the next chapter will show.

ANALYSIS OF SELECTED WRITINGS OF GERALD WEST ON AFRICAN MASCULINTIES

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the previous chapter, the analytic gaze of this study has turned to selected writings of each of the scholars this study is primarily about. To this end, the previous chapter examined the themes that emerge in the writings of Ezra Chitando. The present chapter focuses on the writings of Gerald West. In this chapter I shall attempt at the onset to provide a brief background about the person behind the writings. Although the focus of this thesis is not on the person himself per se, this is necessary in order to shed more light on the text examined. This brief background also says something about West's theological context. I then go straight into the analysis of his writings that are on, related or relevant to the question of African masculinities in relation to gender justice. This is done in almost the same fashion as the previous chapter: the thematic networks diagram that captures the themes that emerge in his writings is presented first. The themes in the diagram are then described and discussed. The section before the conclusion takes the discussion further by offering a critical evaluation of the writings and issues that emerge. It is important that I state right from the outset that Gerald West has published very broadly on different issues especially on issues around African Biblical hermeneutics, exegesis, and Contextual Bible Studies (CBS). I did not examine all of these writings or intend to suggest that I did. My focus was on the few writings that addressed issues of masculinities and those that enabled me to understand and interpret his ideas on masculinities.

4.2. GERALD WEST

Gerald West is a Biblical scholar and professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. He was also the director of the Ujamaa Center for Community Development and Research. Together with the staff, members of the center and students from the SRPC²⁰ West conducts hundreds of Contextual Bible Study (CBS) with communities in different contexts and

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places around the world through which they address a number of community and social issues.²¹ These issues range from HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence to more recently, issues of masculinities, mostly among “black South Africans from poor, working-class and marginalized communities” (West and Ujamaa staff, 2011:3). CBS is central to the work and writings of Gerald West as it is one of the key practices that seem to define him as a socially engaged Biblical scholar.²²

One key text that has been used by West for such CBS is the the story of the rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13. Used in a CBS for the first time in 1996, the text had effects that resulted in more usage and reflection, and the birth of the Tamar Capmpaign by the Ujamaa Center. Having used this text to address issues like rape and GBV for many years, West (2012) recounts how the same text is now being used to address issues of masculinities in CBS. While there are other Biblical texts that have been used for the same goal,²³ West’s writings on African masculinties largely deal with his experiences while using the story of Tamar.

From the foregoing, it is probably becoming quite obvious what might be considered “home” for West in terms of theology, namely, liberation hermeneutics. The works of West show a great concern for those he calls the “ordinary readers” of the Bible. This phrase designates a group of Bible readers better explained in his own words:

...‘ordinary “readers”’ ... I place the term in inverted commas to signal that my use of the term “reader” is both literal and metaphoric in that it includes the many who are illiterate, but who listen to, retell and remake the Bible. The other term in the phrase, the term ‘ordinary’, is used in a general and a specific sense. The general usage includes all readers who read the Bible pre-critically. But I also use the term ‘ordinary’ to designate a particular sector of pre-critical readers, those readers who are poor and marginalized. In my discussion, the particular usage usually takes precedence over the general (West, 2003:x).

²¹ CBS is a method of studying the Bible using the See, Judge and Act approach. It basically includes a reading of the Bible by a group (or even individuals) within a particular context and guided by a number of questions that enable the readers to reflect more deeply with the biblical text read, and respond to what they believe God is telling them through the text with planned action. Thus, within the local context of the need of a given poor, working class and/or marginalized community, the CBS begins with an analysis of the context (See), then the selected biblical text is read again “to allow the biblical text to speak to the context (Judge)”. This then leads to action in response to the message received from the text and reflection (Act) (West and Ujamaa Staff, 2011).

²² West (2003:x) defines socially engaged biblical scholars as “those biblical scholars who have chosen to collaborate with the poor and marginalized in their struggles for survival, liberation and life”.

²³ See the “Redemptive Masculinity” CBS manual. www.ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za

This clarity is important for two reasons. First, it enhances our understanding of West's work and reflections on masculinities as these ordinary readers are always at the center. Second, it is this very engagement with such readers that partly but firmly locates him within liberation hermeneutics which is important to the foundations of liberation theologies (West, 2003:xi). This, he argues, "begins with the reality, experiences, needs, interests, questions and resources of the poor and marginalized" (West, 2003:xi). Given this brief background on West and his works on masculinities, I now focus on themes that emerge. Noteworthy however is the fact that other than discussing issues of masculinities as such, some of West's writings that deal with the subject actually display another intention. This has to do with cases where the Tamar CBS on masculinities is used as an example or case where exegesis is enhanced by appropriation (e.g. West, 2013b). While I acknowledge this tendency, issues of exegesis and appropriation *as such* are not given attention beyond their relevance to my focus on African masculinities.

4.3. DEDUCED THEMES FROM THE WRITINGS OF GERALD WEST ON AFRICAN MASCULINITIES

Figure 3 below presents the thematic networks of the themes I drew from the writings of West on masculinities. The middle-level or organizing themes represent a more abstract representation of the basic or lower level themes around them. They are the principles, ideas or concepts through which the global theme or main claim, in the middle of the diagram, is arrived at.²⁴ I wish to stress here that there is no specific hierarchical order in the arrangement of the themes. The most important thing is that each of the themes in a way leads to and contributes to the global theme. The themes also do not exclude each other, there is room for fluidity and overlap (Attride-Stirling, 2001:389). Some of the themes may capture a term or phrase in the writings of Gerald West, however this is not a principle that I strictly employed for this study because other themes are more about ideas. While my discussion on the themes will focus on the organizing and global themes, the basic themes will be explained in and through the organizing themes.

²⁴ Details of how the thematic networks is structured and how it works are provided in the section on research methodology in chapter one.

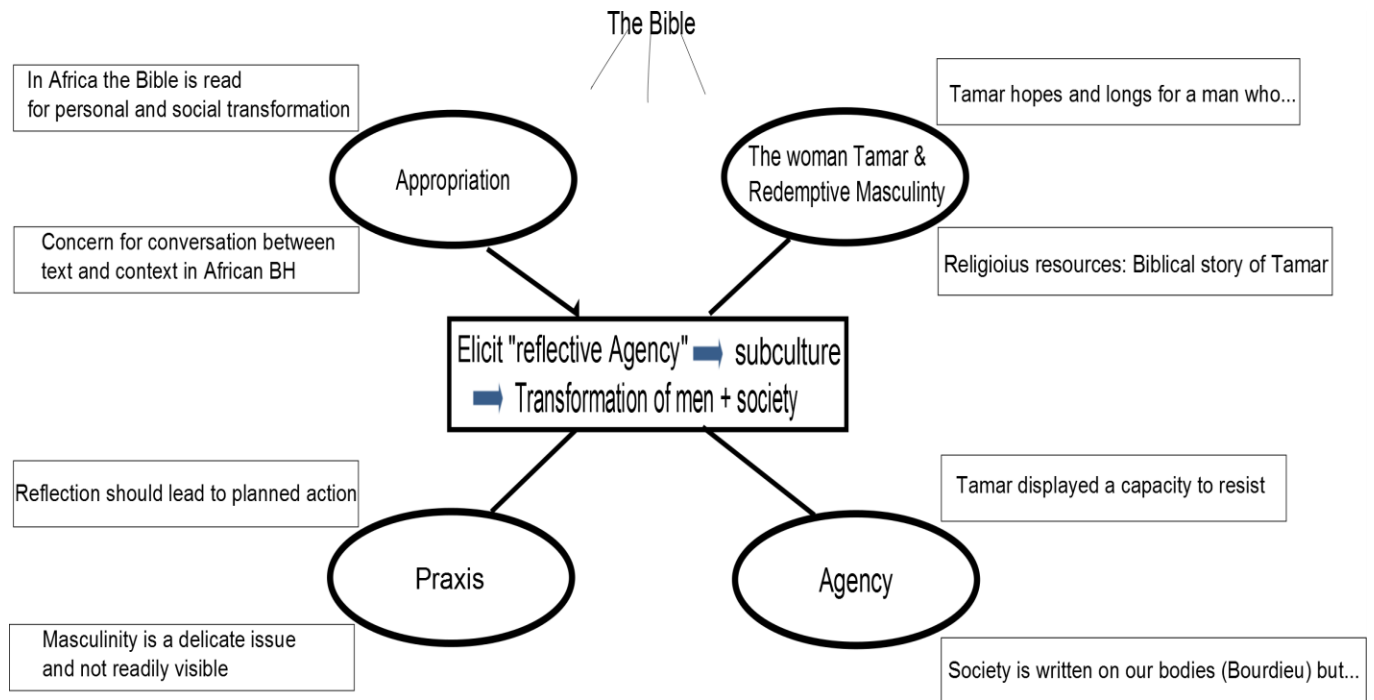


Figure 3: Thematic networks of themes deduced from the writings of G. West on African masculinities. Structure is guided by Attride-Stirling (2001:388)

Based on my interpretation and deduction, the global theme or major claim in the works of West on masculinities, as depicted in the diagram, is this. That individual (men's) and larger scale social transformation is possible when "reflective agency" is elicited among a group, even a small group, who can form a subculture²⁵ that will become a sort of resistance and force for change against the dominant social structure. I discuss this in more detail after discussing the other mid-level themes through which this conclusion is arrived.

It will be noted that at the top of my representation of the themes in West's writings (figure 3) is the Bible with three diverging lines meant to illustrate some form of illumination. The intention here is to show that the Bible seems not only central and runs through but also illuminates

²⁵ The term "subculture" calls up a number of debates. It's usage here is based on the definition of Kahn and Kellner that "subcultures traditionally represent alternative cultures and practices to dominant cultures of the established society" and that they possess "resistant and activist temperaments" (Kahn and Kellner, 2003:299).

everything in West's works. It seems like if it is taken away, all other themes would lose their significance and probably, existence. With this in mind, I discuss the four organizing themes in the diagram.

4.3.1. Appropriation

The notion of appropriation is crucial for the understanding of the works of West on masculinities, especially as an underlying principle that brings about transformation within the readers of the Bible in terms of dangerous masculinities. I consider it part of the theoretical framework within which West reflects on his work on masculinities. African Biblical interpretation is characterized by a tendency to create a link between the Biblical text that is being interpreted and the context where it is being read (Ukpong, 2000:11). West observes that although emphasis is often given to the text and context (two poles), often in a rather comparative way, a third pole is equally significant, which is the "appropriation" of the text by the reader²⁶ (West, 2013b:1). This has to do with the fact that the actual meeting point of the text and the context is the reader in whom it is appropriated. In other words, appropriation refers to the process whereby the Bible text that is read actually enters into conversation with the African reading context in the mind of the person reading it (West, 2008:1-2). The methodology of the CBS is believed to take this third pole seriously. It allows the readers to own the text they have read, having analyzed their context, and allows their context and the text to speak to each other and come alive in them, and it is within and through this process that "emancipatory" action springs (West and Ujmaa Staff, 2011:4). Thus, appropriation is a crucial principle in the writings of West if we are to understand how dangerous forms of masculinities are exposed and "redemptive" alternatives produced or constructed. It is especially important if we consider the argument that both ordinary readers/interpreters of the Bible and scholars in the African context read the Bible for social and personal transformation (Ukpong, 2000:24; West, 2008:2).

4.3.2. Praxis

This concern for linkage between text and context for transformation is immediately evident even in the writing style of West on masculinities. These writings are all built around and are reflections on his work with communities using the Tamar CBS. This approach, just like the

²⁶ Refer to section 3.2. for clarity on what West actually means when he talks about "reader" of the Bible.

CBS itself, is a form of praxis. Praxis is a central term in liberation theology which denotes a kind of reflective action which should be given priority in doing theology (Ducker, 2005:1). West holds that as an ongoing cyclical process of action and reflection, praxis is at the heart of their work with communities using CBS (West, 2012:177). He explains that “action” within this notion of praxis is “actual action in a particular struggle, and integrally related to this action is reflection on the action. Integrally related to this action-induced reflection is further action, refined or reconstituted by reflection on and reconsideration of theory (and so on goes the cyclical process)” (West, 2013:177; 2013:673). West’s writings on African masculinity gives a feel of this cyclical process as they are basically a reflection on the actual application and experience with the Tamar CBS. Apart from being an important part of liberation theology which frames West’s works on masculinity, does this theme of praxis in any way speak to the issue of masculinities in the context of this work?

I think it does. First, it gives a picture of continuous reformulation, refinement, reconstruction, reexamination and (re) engagement with theory as West and his colleagues apply different CBS in different contexts, especially in the search for “redemptive masculinities” which he clearly demonstrates in his writing (West, 2013a:14). This speaks to the fact that masculinity is a rather delicate issue that requires careful attention as can be deduced from the literature (e.g. Barker and Ricardo, 2005). Moreover, given the elusive nature of the notion of masculinities and how deeply woven it is into cultures, “coming at it from a number of angles using the Biblical text as a resource” (West, 2012:182, 183) is justified. Second, it takes seriously the goal of transforming dangerous forms of masculinities into better alternatives and further supports the global theme (claim) that given the space and tool, some level of transformation can be attained. The next subsection examines more closely this idea of alternative masculinity: what exactly constitutes an alternative in the thinking of West?

4.3.3. The Woman Tamar and “Redemptive Masculinity”

Before addressing this question, it is important to highlight the significant place that the works of West accord women. The character of Tamar, a woman, occupies an important place in the CBS on 2 Samuel 13, even in its usage to address issues of masculinities. This places women in an important and conspicuous position with regards to the understanding and construction of

dominant and existing forms of masculinities on the one hand, and the production and construction of alternative masculinities on the other. I think this is a very important perspective on masculinity that rarely gets the attention it requires. Some of the questions on the Bible Studies, for instance, seek to get to Tamar's understanding of masculinities based on her words and her actions in the story (question 5 and its sub-questions for instance, West, 2013:676). Concentrating on both Tamar and Amnon also brings out the important fact that approaches to masculinities and gender justice work best when they do not exclusively focus on any one gender group (men or women).

On the question raised earlier about alternative masculinity, Gerald West is consistent in his use of the phrase "Redemptive Masculinities" to denote other forms of being a man. However, none of his works consulted gives a distinguishing definition or description of what alternative or "redemptive" masculinities actually means. However, the manner in which they are used show that they envisage positive, life-affirming, and peaceful forms of masculinities that are alternatives to dangerous forms. What should constitute such a redemptive alternative is in practice left open to the CBS participants' imagination together with the woman Tamar (West, 2013a:18). That which I would consider as a suggestion of what (should?) constitute, at least partly, an ideal alternative and redemptive masculinities in the works of West is presented through the eyes, hopes and longing of Tamar, a woman:

Tamar summons forth, anticipates, hopes for, a man who understands "no", who understands what it means to be in relationship as a "brother", who is able to resist using force, who respects the socio-cultural traditions of his community, who is able to discern and desist from doing what is disgraceful, who considers the situation of the other, who considers the consequence of his action for himself, who is willing to pause and examine other options, who is willing to listen to rational argument (West, 2012:184).

It is interesting that, first, men are actually allowed to see who they are, not from their own blind or defensive perspective, but from the perspective of women. And they also get the chance to see something different from their own narrow vision of masculinities which they not only perform but guard carefully. They see that from the angle of women, there are alternatives. I shall return to this theme in my section on critical evaluation. Second, it should be noted that this "ideal" man which Tamar hopes for does not seem to be presented by West as a kind of formula or norm

for everyone, but each group is also able to reflect on their own context and can use the above features to help them in doing so (West, 2012:185). The foregoing discussion on the key role of women in constructing and deconstructing dominant masculinities, as well as the reasoning behind the suggestion of alternatives presuppose the existence of agency. This is because only agents possess the capacity to originate, effect or work towards such changes within such social structures as gender inequality (Pettit, 2007:495). This notion of agency is the fourth organizing theme in the writings of West, as explored in the next section.

4.3.4. Agency

The theme of agency comes out strongly. This is brought up clearly in the person of Tamar who in the story of her rape displays the “capacity” to act and to influence or change a situation. And West’s emphasis on this capacity to act, to resist, in Tamar’s story is in line with the feminist and womanist approaches to gender justice which have sought to show that the woman can be and is an “agent” (West, 2013a:12-14). The agency of Tamar, though a woman, points to the agency of everyone in an oppressed or marginalized situation, whether man or woman. It also shows agency in a reverse way in the sense that even those in privileged positions are capable of reflexivity and of bringing about transformation. This is visible in the way the CBS allows men (as “privileged” by patriarchy) to question and understand the construction of masculinities in their own contexts and to search for and envision new alternatives, as well as take specific action for change (West, 2012:180-184).

Important to this notion of agency in the works of West is the notion of “reflective agency”, which seems to capture for me a very important idea. This concept is best understood in relation and contrast to the thinking of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, which West himself discusses in some detail. Bourdieu’s idea that is relevant in the present context is that people are social subjects who acquire ways of “doing” and “being” during their socialization. They do this in such a way that they possess very limited capacity to identify their situation, especially regarding masculine domination, reflect, interpret, criticize it and initiate change (West, 2012:186). In other words, they lack “reflective agency” as James’ Bohman is said to have put it (West 2012:186). West argues that the search for redemptive masculinities through the Tamar CBS provides an opportunity and a space for people to be “reflective agents”. It provides “an

offstage subculture” within which this reflection, criticism, and negation of dominant and harmful kinds of masculinities can be done, creating a “disruption” that though starting with a small group can evolve into larger forms of resistance (West, 2012:190-191). Thus, while Bourdieu would envision a large scale kind of undertaking that can interrogate the structures and institutions behind dominant masculinities “rigorously”, West calls our attention to the possibility of transformation that begins from small projects like the Tamar CBS on redemptive masculinities. He holds that these CBS produce a social space which enables “what is embodied to come to some kind of articulation and for this articulation to lead, potentially, to some kind of social transformation” (West, 2012:186).

It is important to note that West makes reference to an “array of resources” they have collected in their work with communities on the Tamar CBS (West, 2012:176). However, the Bible and specifically the story of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 is named as the primary resource (West, 2012:176) which is used to produce such agency. In relation to this would be other important resources that deserve mentioning, such as the mastery of the science (and maybe art) of Biblical interpretation which are employed during the CBS; and the “social space” itself which the CBS creates and which brings participants in contact with their own selves as “reflective agents”, amongst other things.

4.3.5. Global Theme

I began my discussion on the themes in the writings of West by stating briefly what I consider the major claim with reference to masculinities. I then discussed each of the mid-level themes in a way that already hints on or has clearly shown why and how I deduced the major claim in his work, represented at the center of figure 3. The themes of appropriation, praxis, alternative masculinities (with emphasis on the role of women through the character Tamar), and agency, or better still, reflective agency, as the preceding subsections show, all feed the global theme. This is that once reflective agency is elicited and the space provided, as the Tamar CBS has done, a subculture is likely to emerge which can potentially (or even actually) lead to individual and social transformation. In this case, such transformation is with particular reference to dominant masculinities which have proven to be harmful. For the purpose of clarity, I use the transitive verb “elicit” to suggest an image of “drawing out” or stimulating the reflective agency that

individuals already possess.²⁷ This is made possible by appropriation and praxis, which both include and result in a search for alternatives that are redemptive.

4.4. CRITICAL EVALUATION

The writings of Gerald West on African masculinities, which constitute reflections on the actual practice of Tamar CBS on “redemptive masculinities”, are quite open. By this I mean that they yield themselves to, and potentially carry much meaning, variations and interpretation on issues of masculinities. This reflects the nature of the CBS itself based on my understanding of it from West’s writings, as allowing appropriation and emergence of subjective meanings of scripture texts. But it also reflects a feature of the subject of reflection, namely, masculinities as usually shaped by specific contexts. This gives confirmation, in practice, to the fluidity and variedness of masculinity (Morrell, 1988a:7). Moreover; these masculinities are addressed at their own local levels, within their own local context and in relation to the specific issues that concern or matter to the people in the context. I think this is a very promising way of thinking about masculinities and also of guiding actions towards transformation, because it acknowledges and takes seriously the internally fragmented, diverse and changing nature of African masculinities (Ratele, 2008b:533). It also encourages flexibility and reflexivity in approaching masculinities whether at a theoretical level or at the level of activism.

Note too, the acknowledgement and room for “participants’ own understanding of the notion of masculinities” (West, 2012:182). Such an approach also allows for the possibility of theories and notions at the academic level to be tested against the realities they seek to explain, as captured in the assertion by West that local participants do “grapple” with the concept of masculinity and participate in “interrogating” their own local experiences and realities that make up the term “masculinity” (West, 2013:677). The CBS on masculinity thus also becomes a vehicle through which ordinary people are able to contribute to knowledge through meanings that emerge from their contexts and experiences (West, 2012:173-174).

²⁷ Pettit (2007) is quite informative about individual and group agency especially in relation to rationality and reasoning.

The challenge to this kind of approach is that there is a tendency to overlook the internal contradictions and socio-cultural norms (though within patriarchal structure) which promote masculinities that are positive and sanction negative ones. Barker and Ricardo (2005:51-54) actually highlight certain aspects of traditional socialization that promote gender equality and alternative masculinities in African societies. A similar idea emerges in the works of West that practices or expressions of certain masculinities contradict others – actual or expected. By raping his sister Tamar, Amnon rejects aspects of traditional masculinities of his time and world that would have potentially been positive in that situation by holding him back from rape. Some of these aspects would include honour, self-domination (self-control), and avoidance of shame (Hoffner, 1966). And as will be seen too in the works of van Klinken in chapter five, West shows that sometimes the alternative to dangerous masculinities may not be “perfect” or meet our ideals of what they should be, but hold significance for transformation. He observes, “Tamar’s evocation of another kind of masculinity, albeit one that only partially deconstructs patriarchy, is an alternative form of wisdom” (West, 2012:191).

In my evaluation of Chitando in chapter three, I observed that he presents a picture of men as perpetrators, which could be detrimental to the way his message is received. With West, there is deliberate effort to avoid such an approach as is evident in their initial reluctance to use the Tamar story to address masculinities (West, 2013a:15). But having found an opening that allows him to use the same text, West observes something I think is very relevant in confronting men. This is the importance of an ability to bring everyone to willingly be involved without resistance or feelings of alienation. West observes that the story of Tamar possesses “an amazing capacity to draw men into the story without them becoming defensive”, because of the fact that participants are able to find a figure in the story that they can identify with (West, 2012:181). Those targeted do not feel condemned or accused of being rapists, yet accepting some “culpability” because in one way or the other, all the men in the rape story participated in the rape (West, 2012:181). This inclusive feature could possibly also have something to do with the nature of the CBS itself or other factors like persons facilitating, disposition of participants, etc. But my emphasis here is on the invaluable lesson for any approach to masculinities especially if geared towards transformation: that it should not alienate men.

While I appreciate this fact, I think that in the final analysis, though in a soft way, men “as a group” are portrayed as perpetrators, or rather, as guilty. This is because as West observes, each of the male figures made available to participants took part in the rape of Tamar. Women, here, are the powerless ones. This is understandable given the pervasive nature of patriarchy, and the fact that men by the mere fact of being men do actually benefit from patriarchy which is more oppressive to women (Morrell, 1998:8). However, given the context and kind of people West works with – poor, working class, marginalized – how does such an approach address issues around certain men’s own experience of powerlessness and marginalization?

I raise this question because it is very likely that there are men in such communities that actually do feel powerless despite belonging to the category “men” whether because of their socio-economic situations or sexual orientation amongst other things. And these factors play important and intertwining roles in the construction of masculinities (Ratele, 2008; Barker and Ricardo, 2005). The point here is that just like in the writings of Chitando, there is a tendency in the works of West towards what van Klinken describes as “monolithic representation of men” which tends to lead to “blaming discourse” (van Klinken, 2011d:5). This approach can sometimes prove problematic because it “simply” blames “men” who are presented as simply dominating “women”. Potentially, such an approach is capable of undermining the appropriate understanding of other issues that may be at play relative to masculinities and specific concerns that are being addressed. It could also limit the chances of involving men in dealing with such issues (van Klinken, 2011d:5).

Going back to the nature of participation of men in the CBS mentioned above, further questions can be raised. To what extent does West’s position as facilitator, being a white South African ‘privileged’ male influence and shape the response and participation of men in the CBS on redemptive masculinities? Moreover, I would believe that West’s poor participants are likely to perceive him as one of the powerful in the society, being a professor and at the same time a well-known religious leader. It would have been interesting to know if and what kinds of power relations are at play during such Contextual Bible Studies from both the perspective of West and the participants. Would the response be the same when West is not facilitating or when he is not known to be associated with such Bible studies?

I have discussed in one of the themes above the fact that West gives an important role to women in a way that is often neglected in masculinity discourses. However, using the Tamar story for the promotion of alternative masculinities, though highly commendable, seems to be a little problematic in terms of potential for greater effects. It is problematic in the sense that it might limit the understanding of masculinities when used among certain men. Although other male characters are present in the story with whom men can identify, Tamar remains a central character and a central reference point. Thus, while seeing masculinities through and with reference to Tamar, a woman's, eyes and experience, can be revealing, it has the potential of limiting what is rendered visible or how it is received. I am imagining, for instance, contexts or situations where a strong sense of male headship or male leadership exists and a woman taking the center stage and determining what "should be", might very likely evoke discomfort and resistance.

Seeing alternative masculinities through the eyes of women has the potential to allow men to see themselves from a different perspective, thus opening their eyes to things they would have hitherto been blind to. It also allows them to see what women as "women" would consider life-promoting, and which is capable of promoting better relationship through a better understanding. However, looked at within a patriarchal context where women and what comes from them are of little value, what are the chances of such a vision or alternative losing some value simply because it comes from women? What I am trying to raise here is the possible limitation to a woman-centered approach to masculinities within the framework of patriarchy. It would have been very informative for West to reflect, for instance, on the effect of a CBS done with Biblical or other resources that allow men to encounter their masculinities through a different kind of man.²⁸ A man for instance that represents not only men's guilt but men's capacity to be different. One that represents the ability to experience the challenges common to men, such as Amnon before the rape, and yet not give in to forces that push him into oppressive acts. Such perspectives I believe would complement what the perspective of women is already achieving

²⁸Gerald West and his team actually use other male Biblical figures for their CBS on masculinities as the "Redemptive Masculinity" CBS manual suggests. However, his writings on masculinities utilize only the Tamar CBS for masculinities and since my work is based on his written works, I can only base my reflections on what he says about the Tamar CBS on masculinities.

and open up more possibilities for men (and women) to interrogate dominant masculinities and bring about transformation.

West's reflection on his community engagements with men and masculinities suggests that he begins from particular notions or perceptions of men and masculinities. There are instances when he makes statements like masculinities are elusive, or embedded in culture (West, 2012:184). However, it is difficult to say clearly where he stands in the general theoretical discourse on masculinities. This is most probably because West's writings do not seem to be on masculinities *per se*. They seem to be more about Biblical hermeneutics, exegesis, transformation and the Tamar CBS than they are about masculinities *as such*. To be sure, the actual practice of CBS on redemptive masculinities seems to be about masculinities but the writings are less so. It would be interesting for West to draw from these experiences and engage key debates about masculinities, as he did to an extent with Pierre Bourdieu (West, 2012). For example, what are some of the nuances that need to be taken into consideration when dealing with masculinities, especially given the dominant social constructionist approach to the issue? Or from his many years of working with local communities, to what extent can we speak of dominant masculinities as "hegemonic"?

In the context of gender justice through the transformation of masculinities, I think there is much to be appreciated from the writings of West which owe largely to his social work with communities using CBS. It brings a sense of hopefulness as it gives a picture of actual engagement and potential transformation. It should be stated though that West does not necessarily talk about gender justice or present his work as particularly geared towards the achievement of such an ideal. Rather, he talks more of individual and social transformation as a broader goal not only of his CBS on redemptive masculinities but of African Biblical scholarship and liberation hermeneutics. And within this broad context, his writings can be interpreted as contributing to the discourse on masculinities that is geared towards achieving gender justice in the light of the analysis and evaluation that has been presented in this chapter.

4.5. CONCLUSION

Although the writings of West that specifically address issues of masculinity are not many compared to other scholars addressed in this study, they are very rich and engaging. And as with the other two scholars, I do not claim to have engaged with his works or the issues they raise exhaustively, for this would require a more extensive kind of study. The chapter has focused on themes that capture the essence of the ideas around masculinities that are present in his writings, especially with reference to the global theme. The chapter also offered a critical evaluation that raised a few questions regarding the themes that emerged in the writing of West on masculinities. There are a few parallels between the reflections of West and those of van Klinken. These are noted in the next chapter which focuses on the works of van Klinken on masculinities.

AFRICAN MASCULINITIES IN SELECTED WRITINGS OF ADRIAAN VAN KLINKEN

5.1. INTRODUCTION

So far in this study, I have analyzed the writings of Ezra Chitando and Gerald West. And to buttress a few points whether by way of critique or in support of certain ideas of these scholars, I have made a few references to van Klinken. This chapter now focuses on his writings and the themes that emerge with respect to masculinity in relation to gender justice. The structure of the chapter is very much like those of the preceding two. It begins with basic background information on van Klinken to enhance a better interaction with his ideas. As part of the background, I discuss briefly the issue of reflexivity which comes out strongly and aids a better understanding of van Klinken's writings. In the same fashion as the previous chapters, a thematic networks diagram²⁹ that is intended to capture the key themes and how they are organized to arrive at a major theme (which I present as a claim) is presented at an early stage in the chapter. These different themes are then discussed in a way that shows how they relate to one another and to the global theme. The chapter also offers a critical evaluation of the writings of van Klinken based on issues that emerge.

5.2. ADRIAAN VAN KLINKEN

Adriaan van Klinken currently lectures on African Christianity at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. His broad area of research and teaching include World Christianity, religion, sexuality and gender, and religion in Africa. His specialty involves "Christianity as a public religion in contemporary African societies, particularly its role in the dynamics of gender, formations of masculinity and debates on (homo) sexuality".³⁰

Most of van Klinken's writings on African masculinities draw from case study researches he did in two Zambian churches. The first one is the Northmead Assembly of God Church where he

²⁹ For detail on the thematic networks analysis refer to methodology section in chapter one.

³⁰ Sourced from van Klinken's wordpress page, <http://adriaanvanklinken.wordpress.com/>. (04/11/2013).

draws mostly from the preaching of its leader, Bishop Joshua H.K. Banda, especially from a series of sermons that address issues of masculinity in an attempt to restore what the preacher calls “Biblical manhood”. The second church is the Regiment Catholic parish where he spent time interacting with and studying members of a men’s group known as St. Joachim (van Klinken, 2011d). His works also show familiarity and critical engagement with the writings and concerns of members of the Circle and related male theologians, especially Ezra Chitando whom he acknowledges and recognizes as a pioneering scholar in the field of masculinities and religion in Africa. Just like Chitando, van Klinken writes almost primarily in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Reflexivity

Van Klinken comes across as a reflexive person in relation to his writings on masculinities. Reflexivity here refers to the process of questioning one’s own attitudes, thinking, biases, values, presumptions, etc. in an attempt to understand and define one’s role and position in relation to the other (Bolton, 2010:14). Given the fact that he is Dutch, and in anticipation of questions this may raise about his motivation for researching on African issues, van Klinken responds in the background to his PhD thesis: “While studying theology I increasingly felt the desire to relate the abstract academic discussion to issues that matter in real life...from there revaluing and enjoying more abstract academic discussions as well...” (van Klinken, 2011d: 5).

Considering the issues that Adriaan van Klinken writes about such as African masculinities, HIV and AIDS in Africa, African theologians, and the local Zambian context, one might take it for granted that he is an African theologian. However, van Klinken does not see himself as one (van Klinken, 2010:17). Neither does he see himself as being involved in “their project of African theology” (van Klinken, 2013b:17). From a reflexive perspective, he makes known his awareness of his position as a Western European scholar, who is aware that historically, knowledge produced about Africa has been colored by Western “hegemony” which tended to present the “other” in very negative lights. Thus, careful not to be found wanting on the same

tendency, van Klinken somewhat distances himself from the effort of African theologians³¹ with regards to the transformation of masculinities. In response to the theology of one of his case studies on sexual diversity, for instance, he noted that, “I feel it is problematic for me as a European scholar to contribute to the transformation of theologies such as those presented by Banda. It is up to African theologians to decide whether and how to develop a queer theology that recognizes sexual diversity in contemporary African society” (van Klinken, 2011c:140). In another writing and based on the same or related reasons, he pointed out that he avoids making any “normative” evaluation of either the African theologians or the Zambian churches he engages with (van Klinken, 2010:4). He describes himself as a “critical outsider” who is critically engaging African theologians and African churches on masculinities, as “part of academic dialogue” (van Klinken, 2010:4; 2011a:106).

To my mind, these reflexive assertions only raise further questions: Why Africa in the first place? Why not other places like Asia or even other European countries? How does his background affect his representation of what he studies in Africa? What is his take on the most important criteria for sharing knowledge, is it plausibility or history of domination and (mis) representation? Is his self-consciousness not limiting how much he is capable of contributing to African theology? Some of these questions also apply to the other two scholars whose writings I discussed in the previous chapters. However, exploring such questions will require a different kind of study with a different objective and methodology from the present one.³² But these issues are referred to, or addressed, to the extent they emerge or are relevant in this study.

5.3. DEDUCED THEMES FROM THE WRITINGS OF VAN KLINKEN ON AFRICAN MASCULINITIES

Based on my analysis of van Klinken’s writings, the global claim (at the center of figure 4) that emerged from his critical engagement with African theologians and his case studies on masculinities is that there is a need for a different analytic frame for issues of masculinities and religion, as well as a different approach to the idea of gender justice. To explore this theme in more detail, I shall discuss the four organizing or mid-level themes in the diagram so as to show

³¹ In the works of van Klinken especially with reference to issues of gender, masculinities and patriarchy, “African Theologians” should be understood as constituting specifically members of the Circle and theologians like Ezra Chitando who works closely with them and follows the tradition of their critique of patriarchy.

³² See chapter one for limitations of this study.

how they lead to this major theme. As I have mentioned in the previous chapters, there is no rigid or hierarchical order in the arrangement of the themes and how they are explained. Although some logic and connection is implied in the way I discuss, it is not of necessity that they should be understood as such. Each organizing theme on its own can feed into the global theme. Moreover, the network format of the diagram allows some fluidity and overlap (Attride-Stirling, 2001:389). As with the last two chapters, the basic themes are captured in and through the organizing themes.

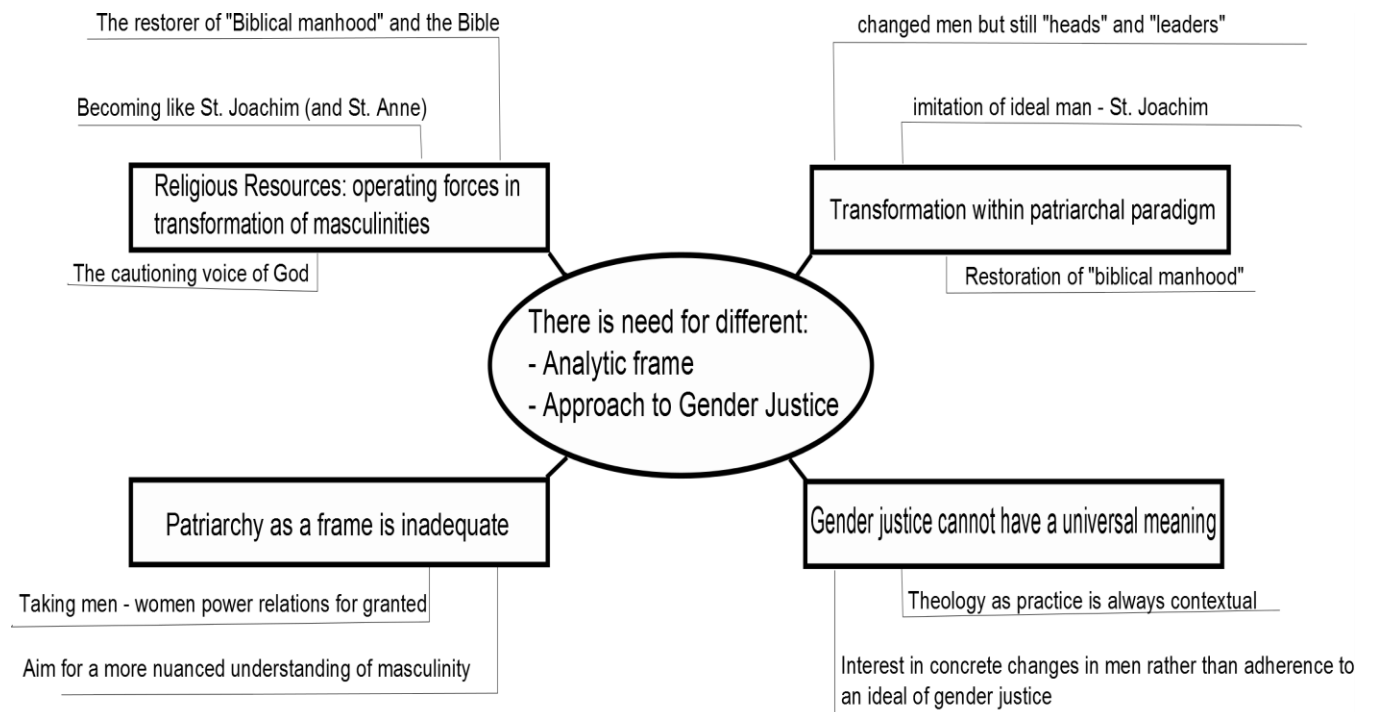


Figure 4: Thematic networks of deduced themes in the writings of A. van Klinken on African masculinities
Structure guided by Attride-Stirling (2001:388).

5.3.1. Operating Forces in the Transformation of Masculinities

The writings of van Klinken on masculinities are largely concerned with what he considers the major question in the study of men and masculinities in Africa about the “motors and sites” of

change in masculinities (Morrell, 2001:20). As raised by Robert Morrell: “What forces operate to effect change in masculinities...when, where and how such changes occur, and what their effects are” (Morrell, 2001:7). This question and the response it seeks is what I consider the skeleton around which every other discussion of van Klinken’s on masculinities is enfolded. And based on his writings, the response to this question would be that in contemporary (Southern) Africa, some of the key forces are religion and religious resources.

In the works of van Klinken two primary resources operate to bring about change in masculinities. The first is the Bible. In the ideal promoted by the Pentecostal case study the Bible is actively used as a source and basis. The alternative masculinity that the preacher promotes, he (the preacher) referred to as “Biblical manhood”, establishing firmly that it is strongly tied to and rooted in the Bible, and in opposition to cultural ideals of masculinity. Other resources like the religious space, service sessions and sermons were used to authoritatively promulgate this ideal (van Klinken, 2013b:157).

The second is a religious figure. The Catholic case study utilizes saints. In Catholic tradition, saints are men and women who are believed to have lived exemplary and holy lives during their lifetime on earth. These individuals are officially declared saints in a process called canonization, and thus presented to the catholic faithful as ideal models of men and women to be venerated and emulated, not only because of the lives they lived on earth, but also because such lives, it is believed, have put them close to God, in a position where they can relate to God on behalf of those who venerate them. Different saints symbolize different ideals and models for followers. And different groups in the church adopt saints that embody their vision or the virtues they want their members to emulate.³³ Against this backdrop the case study of St. Joachim’s men’s group encourages the transformation of masculinities. Members are presented with his life and virtues which they strive to imitate and by so doing, transform negative expressions of masculinity into better alternatives (van Klinken, 2013a:126-131).

³³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 954 – 962; The US Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/upload/making-saints.pdf>

Another unique religious resource in the works of van Klinken is the idea of an internal guidance and felt internal presence of the divine that helps individuals as they struggle against odds to maintain their new masculinities. This is captured in the example of one of the respondents in the Pentecostal case study who speaks about hearing the voice of God cautioning him when he is faced with temptation (van Klinken, 2012a:232). Whether it is truly the voice of God or not is not of relevance here, what is important is that it stems from his understanding and relations with his religion and serves as a personal and vital resource in the construction and maintenance of masculinities that are life-giving.

More religious resources can be drawn from the writings of van Klinken such as African women's theology itself and theologians, religious leaders like Bishop Banda, etc. But the aim here is to illustrate the significance of religion and religious resources in the transformation of masculinities in Africa as presented in the writings of van Klinken.

However, it is important to note that van Klinken highlights two trends within this religious discourse on the transformation of masculinities. The first is that of the African theologians whose vision is to transform masculinities "beyond" patriarchy. The second is that of the two case studies in Zambia whose transformation (or restoration in the case of the Pentecostal church) of masculinities is "within" patriarchy (van Klinken, 2010:16). These trends inform our discussion on the other themes as they raise questions, some of which van Klinken himself grapples with. For instance, if transformation of masculinities can take place within patriarchy, is it necessary to envision one that goes beyond it? Are these two approaches to masculinities mutually exclusive? What are the implications of each for the other and for the ideal of gender justice envisioned by African theologians? Which of these approaches is more effective and pragmatic? With such questions in mind, I discuss the second organizing theme in the writings of van Klinken.

5.3.2. Transformation (or restoration) Within the Paradigm of Patriarchy

Van Klinken argues that both African theologians and his case studies have a common interest in men and masculinities, they both decry dangerous forms of masculinities and also search for alternative masculinities (van Klinken, 2013b:166-167). From the Pentecostal perspective, the aim is to "restore" what they termed "Biblical manhood" which is believed to be in opposition to

“African” cultural ideals of manhood and based on manhood as intended by God in the Bible (van Klinken, 2013b:156). Thus, they respond to dangerous masculinities characterized by “preoccupation with sex, drinking of alcohol, domestic and sexual violence, male dominance over women and an overall irresponsibility of men” (van Klinken, 2010:9-10; 2012a:220). The alternatives they actively promote include the idea of men who are responsible, who take seriously their roles as heads and leaders, and who possess self-control (van Klinken, 2010:9-10). Men are also to extend their roles in the family to their immediate communities and to the society.

St. Joachim’s Catholic Men’s group is also engaged in the business of redefining masculinities. Van Klinken noted that its concern regarding male behaviour is similar to that of the Pentecostal church, such as inappropriate sexual behavior, alcoholism, irresponsibility in relation to marriage and family, injustices to women and laxity regarding faith and church (van Klinken, 2013b:69-76, 149). However, unlike the Pentecostal, the ideal alternative masculinity is not clearly and actively handed down to the people in sermons and clear labels like the “Biblical manhood”. Rather, “it is symbolically represented by ancient figures such as St. Joachim and St. Joseph, who embody the moral and spiritual virtues considered important for Catholic men” (van Klinken, 2013b:157). The alternative ideal of masculinities they promote is very much like that of the Pentecostal with the additional emphasis on spirituality in terms of nurturing a life of prayer, Bible study and participating diligently in religious sacraments and activities, and also in terms of the man’s position as the spiritual leader of the family (van Klinken, 2013b:84-85).

Van Klinken himself does not propose any kind of alternative model of masculinity or uphold one over another. This most likely owes to his self-defined position as an outsider, which does not allow him to make any normative evaluations of African discourse on masculinities or even meddle in the project of African theologians and Christian churches to transform African masculinities (van Klinken, 2011c:140). He explores the alternatives of African theologians and his case studies as well as their approaches. And clearly, the case studies achieve results despite the location of their approach within patriarchy and their usage of notions like male headship and leadership which is criticized by scholars like Chitando who calls such notions “myth” (Chitando, 2007:122, 124).

Thus, van Klinken raises a very critical question “whether it is politically effective and necessary to envision a transformation of masculinities beyond patriarchy” (2012b:360). This is because the same patriarchal notions like male headship and leadership also have the potential to motivate and bring about the transformation of masculinities, even though, understandably, they can empower men to dominate women, which justifies a certain level of sensitivity to these notions (van Klinken, 2012b:360). The case studies are able to present notions of leadership and headship that are actually opposed to male dominance, oppression and dangerous expressions of masculinities (van Klinken, 2011a:114). These notions are balanced with an understanding of gender equality that allows for the incorporation of both “partnership in marriage and primary male responsibility” challenging men to be caring towards their families as heads and leaders, and to extend this role into the wider society (van Klinken, 2010:12). Therefore, inasmuch as African theologians seek to transform masculinities beyond patriarchy through a critical engagement with gender, the case studies show that the same goal can be achieved, to an extent, within patriarchy (van Klinken, 2010: 9-10; 2010:12; 2012a:220).

Van Klinken does not anywhere in his works suggest that any of these two approaches is better than the other, or that one approach must give way to the other. He rather shows a concern for an effective approach that allows African theologians to maintain their critical perspective on patriarchy and their commitment to gender justice, and yet be able to recognize and engage with other approaches to the transformation of masculinities “in a more nuanced and positive way” (van Klinken, 2010:17). To this end, he suggests, that the idea of “interim” suggested by Chitando might be helpful (2009:50). Though not his usual stance, Chitando showed some openness to the possibility of patriarchal notions of masculinities being used to transform masculinities in relation to HIV. Note that Chitando’s normal position, as with other theologians, would be to see “patriarchy” and “gender justice” as mutually exclusive realities. Thus, van Klinken sees the notion of an “interim” as creating a space for “more fluid understanding” within which life-promoting masculinities can be developed that could promote some level of gender justice, even within contexts and notions that may be seen as patriarchal. Especially given the fact that gender justice is a rather “utopian vision” and an “eschatological hope” (Phiri, 2002:79; Phiri, 2004:43-44) which “cannot be realized at once” (van Klinken, 2010:18).

5.3.3. Patriarchy as a Frame is Inadequate

In addition, van Klinken is very critical of the understanding and usage of the notion of patriarchy amongst African theologians as a framework for understanding and interrogating masculinities and religion. He argues that the concept is rather too “monolithic” or narrow to allow for a more “nuance” or subtle understanding of masculinity in religious discourses (van Klinken, 2010:17). This monolithic view does not see patriarchy beyond a simple “system of male dominance and female subordination” (van Klinken, 2011a:111). Such a perspective does not help in understanding the transformation of masculinities in the African context because it blinds scholars to other effective approaches to the transformation of masculinities (van Klinken, 2013a:137). To buttress this point, van Klinken criticizes Ezra Chitando on his position that Pentecostal churches are not radical enough in their bid to transform masculinities because their approach does not radically break with patriarchy as they still hold on to notions like male as the leader, and male headship (Chitando, 2007:122, 124). He argues that such an attitude blinds Chitando to the fact that the actual transformation he commends in the Pentecostal effort was achieved significantly through the utilization of these very same patriarchal notions (van Klinken, 2012b:360). Further, he argues that Chitando might be overlooking the transformation of masculinities that are taking place within these “patriarchal paradigms” (van Klinken, 2012a:229).

He traces this limiting understanding of patriarchy to the long standing engagement of African women theologians with gender issues based on an ideal of gender justice and gender equality, which is in strong opposition to patriarchy. And given the root of the current theological/religious engagement with masculinities in the Circle and their vision of gender justice, it is clear why such discourses examine masculinities in terms of patriarchy, and attempt to define alternatives in terms of gender justice or gender equality (van Klinken, 2011b:477). But what exactly do they mean by gender justice, and how feasible and adequate is it as an ideal in relation to the project of transforming masculinities? What would van Klinken’s position be on the same?

5.3.4. Gender Justice cannot have Universal Meaning

Much of van Klinken's engagement with the notion of gender justice is more of a critique of the concept and ideal. Although he expresses some appreciation for the theology of gender justice upheld by African theologians, he expresses concern about the fact that the term "gender justice" is not often clearly defined or explained, but is rather assumed to be axiomatic. Also that it is too often used by theologians in a way that distances it from reality at the level of the common people, in the sense that it is often removed from history and context (van Klinken, 2013b:180). The aim of organizations like St Joachim, for instance, is not to bring about "gender equitable men" or to radically transform masculinities in order to achieve an ideal of gender justice, but within their patriarchal systems they are able to produce more responsible men. And "in the complex and hard realities in local Zambian communities, women seem to be more interested in concrete and significant changes in the behavior of men than in the question whether men adhere to an abstract ideal of gender equality" (van Klinken, 2013a:137).

Drawing from intercultural theology, van Klinken warns that theology as a practice is always contextual, and that there are no "universal theological-ethical visions for the world". Thus, gender justice being a theological-ethical notion cannot have a universal meaning, or be merely considered as equivalent to notions such as "gender equality" (van Klinken, 2013b:180). It follows, in his opinion, that the meaning of gender justice should be interrogated continuously, in relation to "concrete social, cultural and religious contexts and their specific issues and challenges" (van Klinken, 2013b:180). This is because different contexts would produce different meanings, as different local African discourses such as those presented in the example of the local churches in Zambia can also produce valid and relevant "local theologies of gender justice", even though they may not use the term "gender justice" or develop their theologies systematically as would African theologians (van Klinken, 2013b:180). Such an open and flexible intercultural theological approach to the idea of gender justice encourages sensitivity to the intricate nature of religious engagement with masculinities and gender, and allows an awareness and some appreciation of the different kinds of transformations of masculinities that are going on outside the theological confines (van Klinken, 2013b:180-181).

In anticipation of the question of relativism that such a position could bring, van Klinken holds that local theologies of gender justice do not necessarily include “every religious discourse”. It must be measured by the transformation it brings about (van Klinken, 2013:199). Indeed, this is a plausible suggestion, especially as it resonates with one of the themes that emerged in the chapter on Gerald West: that the specific local context gets the opportunity to allow their issues to emerge as well as their solutions and ideals, which gives them opportunity to be agents in the shaping of their own lives and at the same time contribute their knowledge to the broader religious discourse on masculinity and gender justice.

5.3.5. Global Theme

The exploration of the themes in van Klinken’s writings began with a statement of the global theme. And to show how it was deduced, I have discussed the four organizing themes. This involved showing the two trends that he observes in the different projects to transform masculinities within religious discourse and how this led to a critique of the inadequacy of patriarchy as a frame for understanding masculinity and religion as well as the problem with the universalization of the notion of gender justice. This brings me back to the major claim, that there is need for a different frame for understanding masculinities and a different approach to gender justice. In terms of the latter, the preceding paragraph already discussed van Klinken’s suggestion of an intercultural theological approach. The question yet unanswered is one that naturally follows his portrayal of the notion of patriarchy as an inadequate or limiting frame for analyzing masculinities and religion in Africa. What, if any, would be a better frame that can guarantee the “more nuanced analysis” that patriarchy is unable to achieve?

Van Klinken argues that an analytic frame that shows more sensitivity to the particular ways in which religion produces change in men and masculinities is the notion of male agency (van Klinken, 2011a:122). For him, this notion makes it possible to transcend “a focus on a fixed structure of male-domination” so as to better examine and understand the transformations of masculinities in Africa from the perspective of religion (van Klinken, 2013b:189). His understanding of the term agency has three main features. First, it is critical. This means that the act of resistance of hegemonic forms of masculinities and the embrace of alternatives points to males as agents who are critical of the dominant form of masculinity. Second, it is dynamic

given the dynamic nature of dominant masculinities. And third, it is contextual as evident in how men in specific contexts come across as agents in their own kind of transformation of masculinity (van Klinken, 2013b:190). The notion of agency also makes it possible to see religion in a more positive light as it empowers men for their own and societal transformation. Van Klinken presents examples of men who have shown the ‘capacity’ to “resist peer pressure, to challenge popular notions of masculinity in society, and to claim an alternative male identity” being empowered by their religious discourses and resources such as St. Joachim (van Klinken, 2012a:226).

5.4. CRITICAL EVALUATION

Like those of Chitando and West, the writings of van Klinken are also very engaging and stimulating. His particularly critical and comparative perspective on the works of African theologians and case studies is very informative. It opens up many issues that can easily be overlooked in the project of transforming masculinities by African theologians. The importance of religion and different kinds of religious resources as a force in the transformation of masculinities is another issue he brought out vividly and that should be much appreciated. This is because it reveals further possibilities for the transformation of masculinities.

Van Klinken further encourages a different way of thinking about patriarchy which goes beyond simplistic understandings that could be counterproductive because they deny us a more nuanced engagement with issues of masculinities. It ignites some optimism to think of transformation actually taking place within the paradigm of patriarchy and that this important form of transformation seems to be more pragmatic in a way that common people can easily relate to and appreciate without knowledge of ideals like gender justice. In line with West (2012:191), van Klinken enables an appreciation of “little” steps towards transformation, even if they do not completely deconstruct patriarchy. Viewed critically, such transformation nevertheless constitutes significant steps towards the attainment of gender justice if it is to be understood within the theology of gender justice that frames this study.

The notion of male agency as an alternative frame as presented by van Klinken is a fascinating approach to masculinities that I think will be very effective not only theoretically but in practice. It opens up possibilities for dealing with issues of masculinities especially when understood

against the background of patriarchy which already blinds what can be rendered visible. This is because, as van Klinken (2013b) noted, patriarchy politically represents what feminists are fighting against and is equated with evil that should be deconstructed. Coming from this perspective already blinds or narrows one's ability to see beyond dominance or to understand certain complexities with regard to gender and transformation. And why should we settle for such a frame when a different one such as the proposed male agency can be more effective.

Since gender has to do with power, van Klinken does accord some importance to patriarchy-framed analyses like that of some African theologians which address issues of gender through the deconstruction of social structures that underlie inequality such as patriarchy. My concern is how male agency, as a frame, can enable scholars to better understand, interpret and address issues of masculinities and transformation at a structural level. I do agree that patriarchy is inadequate. But if male agency is suggested as a better option it should be able to enhance the goal of dealing with gender transformation at the level of social structure, unless transformation at that level is not considered equally important. Otherwise, as effective as it is, male agency as a frame still leaves us yearning for an alternative to patriarchy as a frame that seeks to understand issues of masculinity beyond (but not excluding) individual or specific contexts - one that is also able to reconcile both structure and agency. Robert Morrell reminds us of the need to be more subtle in our approach and attempt to understand changes in masculinities when he noted that such changes are "highly complex" (Morrell, 2001:20). In my view, approaches that recognize the dynamic, fluid and inconsistent nature of agency and structure, and their relationship (Hiltin, and Elder, 2007) both in the construction and deconstruction of masculinity, as well as deal with structural and individual dimensions of issues like masculinities would be quite admirable. This of course, is no small task.

It would have been interesting too to know how van Klinken would use the notion of male agency to explain the construction, in the first place, of dominant masculinities in relation to religion in his case study contexts for instance. Also, how individual male agents interact with religion as a social structure or institution in the construction of such masculinities. Furthermore, how this might promote a better understanding of the way religion and religious resources stimulate agency in men towards alternative forms of masculinities.

Guided by intercultural theology, van Klinken argues that gender justice cannot have a universal meaning because it is a theological-ethical concept and theology in practice is always contextual. Thus, we should allow local theologies to emerge from specific religious, cultural and other contexts, depending on their specific issues. Conscious of the relativism that may be implied in such a position, he provides a kind of benchmark for measuring whether a given religious discourse qualifies as a contextual theology of gender justice. He says,

when gender becomes an explicit theme in religious discourse, out of a concern about current configurations of gender in society that are oppressive and with the aim of transforming these configurations so that they become more life-giving and foster the human dignity of every person regardless of sex, then we can speak of local theology of gender justice in practice (van Klinken, 2013b:180).

I think van Klinken did well to bring out this important point and to emphasize the phrase “in practice”, because he then leaves an opening that seem to suggest that there can be a universal meaning for gender justice as long as it is not being talked about in the context of actual “practice”. Yet, his intercultural theological approach came as part of his critique of the notion of gender justice as used by African theologians. I do not see how their understanding of gender justice becomes a problem because it also comes across as an ideal and a vision rather than what necessarily stems from practice. In fact, it has been described as a “utopian vision” (Phiri, 2002:79). This gives a picture of gender justice as something “out there”, an ideal that we aspire to. And this aspiration shapes our practice because it gives us direction and an image of what “should be”, rather than what “is” or what has emerged from practice.

Against this background, I see a problem with the idea of local theologies of gender justice which are not geared towards a more universal vision or ideal. The advantage of such ideals and utopian visions could be that they stretch our imagination beyond what we know and what we “thought” we were capable of imagining. As I have mentioned above, van Klinken gives us some benchmark for measuring what constitutes such theologies, but what if in actual fact, within a given context, a theology of gender justice that emerges is actually oppressive but appears to be transforming men and even perceived so by the locals? Moreover, based on van Klinken’s provision, it means there must be a way of judging whether the religious discourse of any context is explicitly about gender, whether certain configurations are “oppressive” or whether they are “life-giving”. If this is so, it then means such judgments would be based on universal meanings

attached to issues like human dignity, gender, oppression, etc. even if these notions contain some internal variations. Of course, we can comparatively know if a certain gender practice is more life giving or better than another within one specific contexts by comparing two instances as I illustrate shortly.

It would have been very enlightening for van Klinken to present a more concrete example of what might constitute a specific contextual theology or meaning of gender justice. Nonetheless, imagine a scenario like the one the *Zambian Defense Minister* was recently reported to have appraised, that *beating one's wife is a sign of love*.³⁴ Imagine also that this belief has found its way into a given religious discourse that promotes it either actively or by being silent about it. Something suddenly changes and instead of beating their wives the men in this case start caring for them. Based on a comparison between the practice before and after the change, we can decide whether the “new men” are better than the wife-beating men. Which allows van Klinken to argue that “better” is relative to the “the challenges and issues in concrete social context” (van Klinken, 2013b:199).

But taking the scenario further, the women, because that is what they “know” as what “ought” to be, can feel unloved because their husbands have stopped beating them. In that case, *not beating* their wives can, arguably, constitute *gender injustice* or even *dangerous masculinities*. And if the men revert back to beating their wives it can be argued that some amount of gender justice has been served, and a *better* alternative masculinity attained. If such a local practice and mindset informs a local contextual “theology of gender justice”, can we accept that as a valid theology of gender justice? It could involve some gender discourse; it could involve some transformation towards what can be argued as promoting the dignity of the women in that context rather than being oppressive. If such a scenario cannot be accepted, then it would be based on some universal notion of gender justice. Otherwise, how also do we deal with contradictions that may arise in both contextual ideals and practice of “gender justice”? Should gender justice be interpreted in terms of what is, what has emerged or what ought to be and can guide practice?

To my mind, an idea of gender justice that allows meaning to spring from a given context is limiting because such meanings would be limited by how much knowledge is available to

³⁴News report by Nkode, F. (23/05/2013) http://www.postzambia.com/post-read_article.php?articleId=33103

enhance a better alternative and production of alternatives. The source of such knowledge can also be dominating and dangerous thereby providing what might appear as transformative but which is probably only a guise. Thus, some level of universal meaning can help check such guises. To be sure, the question naturally arises, who decides on such universal meanings? Or whose meaning should we impose on others? It is here that I see the relevance of van Klinken's emphasis on the need for dialogue, which to an extent is what his book has achieved as he observed (van Klinken, 2013:199).

The reasoning behind dialogue would include a desire for some level of universal understanding and probably "agreement", even if it is a utopian one. I think of dialogue more in line with David Bohm's understanding that involves a "stream of meaning" that flows within, between, or among the person or persons engaged in the act of dialogue. And out of this experience will flow a new meaning or understanding in the sense of a "shared meaning" which holds the people and societies together as a "glue" or "cement" (Bohm, 1990:2). Besides this motive, why advocate for dialogue? Van Klinken, for instance, was only able to show the inadequacy of patriarchy as a frame by bringing African theologians to dialogue with local Zambian case studies. This enabled him to propose a more "universal" frame of male agency and a rather "universal" position that gender justice cannot have a universal meaning.

I agree with van Klinken that African theologians should avoid using the notion of gender justice as if it were self-explanatory. But my contention is that if within the framework of intercultural theology there cannot be a universal meaning for gender justice, then we should adopt a different framework which allows for such universal meanings especially at the level of ideals and vision. The value is that it would make the project of (and understanding of such) transformation of masculinities and the emergence of local contextual theologies of gender justice more effective in practice. This is because it would provide a higher vision and ideal that can shape local practice and give a sense of direction to local theologies that might emerge in different contexts.

5.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the writings of Adriaan van Klinken on African masculinities in relation to gender justice. The themes that emerge are discussed at some length. The direction of the

discussion as determined by the tool of analysis allowed me to examine the four themes that served as the organizing theme or principle through which the major claim is arrived at. Thus, ensuring a more logical and clearer understanding of the global theme, even though the emphasis was not necessarily on the logical flow of the ideas in the themes in the order they were discussed.

As with Chitando and West, it would be an extravagant claim to suggest that I have exhausted the themes or the possible issues that could emerge in the works of van Klinken as this would require a much larger kind of study. I am particularly aware that due to the global theme I arrived at in my analysis and my aim of showing how this was reached through other themes, I was unable to address in this chapter themes like homosexuality and sexual diversity. These are actually present in the works of van Klinken, but more is said about them in the next chapter. No doubt, however, van Klinken's writings on masculinities and religion are quite provocative. They are quite informative and at the same time raise crucial questions. One other unique feature of his writings is the fact that they enable us to see the ideas of other writers, such as African theologians, on the same subject in a different light. Although coming from a "critical outsider" his writings hold much value for such discourse in Africa.

GENERAL EVALUATION, PROPOSITION AND CONCLUSION

6.1. INTRODUCTION

As discussed in chapters one and two, I have used the theology of gender justice as the theoretical framework for this study. As a lens for examining the writings of Chitando, West and van Klinken on African masculinities, this framework colored and determined the kind of themes that enjoyed preference in my study. It explains why my study leaned more towards themes like alternative masculinities, transformation, the role of religious resources, and the notion and vision of gender justice itself. Now that these themes and more have been discussed in the three chapters preceding this one, I shall provide a more general evaluation. This general evaluation begins by drawing some elements from my theoretical framework and exploring more what these elements enabled me to see in the writings of these scholars on the subject of masculinities. Since I have already discussed these writings in three chapters, what I intend to do here is not necessarily to bring out something new. It is just a way of organizing and summarizing what already came up in the preceding three chapters in a way that relates them more directly to my theoretical framework and allows me to bring together comparable, contestable and contrastable issues and themes that emerged in my analysis.

Although all that has been discussed so far already highlights the contribution of Chitando, West and van Klinken to the discourse on masculinities in relation to gender justice, this chapter also attempts to provide a clear summary of these value-laden contributions. Based on some of the questions I raised and the reflections that emerged from their writings, I also make some propositions. This is intended to show how the writings of these scholars can be further stretched and how they and other scholars and activists in the field of masculinities can further contribute to the discourse and to the activist goal of transformation towards a more humane world. The chapter ends with a general conclusion that is meant to serve the entire thesis by recapping it and suggesting possible areas that could be further pursued given the limitations of the study.

6.2. GENERAL EVALUATION

The theology of gender justice as a frame for this study is strongly rooted in the idea of justice as God's character and the need to reflect this character in the several levels of relationships among and between men and women as *humans* created in God's image. Only then, can *all* forms of oppression within these relationships be overcome (Phiri 2002; Dube 2001). I emphasized the words "human" and "all" because I wish to stretch the meaning and application in this study to include not only oppressive relations of men towards women as distinct gender groups but to open it further to other forms of oppression that might exist even within each gender group. The underlining thinking here is more in line with Harrison's definition of justice as "rightly ordered relationships of mutuality within the total web of our several relations" (1985:253 quoted in Kang 2005:286).

This "stretched" understanding is barely reflected in the works of Chitando and West when they deal specifically with masculinities. What emerged is that they tend to speak more of women as oppressed or marginalized, most often, by men, especially in relation to issues of HIV and AIDS and GBV. This notion most likely reflects to a large extent, the reality on ground, especially when looked at from the angle of patriarchy (Phiri, 2002:79) - and given the argument that patriarchy is so pervasive that in Christian history being "human" was equated with being "male" (Clifford, 2002:9). I discussed van Klinken's critique of a simplistic understanding of power relations between men and women as informed by the notion of patriarchy among African theologians (van Klinken, 2013b). But in terms of the disadvantaged group in gender relations especially in relation to HIV and AIDS, he did not present any picture that is different from one that presents women as a disadvantaged or even marginalized group. However, the image of women as marginalized or oppressed by men comes out more strongly in the writings of Chitando.

Much of the discourse of these scholars also focused more on the dominant or hegemonic forms of masculinities with very limited attention to other forms of masculinities and their experience in relation to power, domination, etc. The exemption would be van Klinken, to an extent, who explores the theme of homosexuality in relation to masculinity in his case study. He shows how homosexuals are excluded from the definition of "man" or "Biblical manhood" in discourses by

people like Joshua Banda based on a heteronormative theology that understands sexuality in heterosexual terms (van Klinken, 2012b:346-347; 2011c:133-135). Although he saw the work of deciding whether and how to develop a theology that recognizes sexual diversities as primarily that of African theologians, van Klinken offers a suggestion. This has to do with Banda's representation of Jesus as God's "innovation of masculinity". He argues that this suggests an idea of recreation which can be followed through in order to redefine the meaning of manhood in ways that do not tie it to "a fixed heteronormative order of creation", but is flexible and open to new ways of understanding (van Klinken, 2011c:140). In addition he argues that Christologically, there is no difference between male and female in Christ (Gal. 3:28). This, according to him, undermines heteronormativity in terms of male-female separation and accommodates multiplicity in gender and sexual identities (van Klinken, 2011c:134-135).

In terms of gender justice as a vision and practice that promotes life for all regardless of sex and gender, it is interesting the kind of themes that emerged from the writings of Chitando, West and van Klinken. Chitando, in the tradition and style of the Circle, as observed in chapter three, sees gender justice as a goal or vision to be achieved. And this goal cannot be achieved within patriarchy as gender justice and patriarchy are "mutually exclusive" although van Klinken observes a particular case where Chitando (2009:50) showed some compromise to his prevailing position. By this, he means that Chitando shows some acceptance of the possibility of patriarchal notions being effective in the transformation of masculinities (van Klinken, 2010:17). This opening was appraised by van Klinken who advocates for an intercultural theological approach to gender justice which takes history and context seriously, as discussed in chapter five. West on his own part does not necessarily talk about gender justice as such. But within his broader goal of personal and social transformation we can imply gender justice. Better still if we look at West's liberation theology perspective and his concern with the poor and marginalized. And in the case of his discourse on masculinities within the frame of this study, women would largely constitute the marginalized or oppressed.

Thus, in the sense of gender justice as promoting the fullness of life for all, it can be said of all three scholars that their works in some way drive toward the achievement of gender justice, even if they do not all explicitly speak of it in these terms. This is more evident in the emergence of

themes on alternative masculinities in forms such as “redemptive” or “liberating” masculinities. These alternatives are presented in the sense that they are life-promoting, especially in West and Chitando as discussed in chapters three and four.

I consider van Klinken a “slight” exception here. This “slight” exception is meant only to recognize the fact that he does not choose to belong or join the project of African theologians like West and Chitando towards liberating men or producing “redemptive” masculinities (van Klinken, 2013b:190). Moreover, he does not himself promote any specific kind of alternative in the same way the other two scholars do. However, he also recognizes the need for alternatives. He further recognizes the need to take seriously and not overlook alternatives that result from concrete local religious discourses albeit their utilization of patriarchal notions. To emphasize further the importance of these small-scale transformations he challenges the use of patriarchy as an analytical frame and suggests male agency as a more effective alternative.

Together with West, van Klinken enhances appreciation of other religious discourses on masculinities that are constructive in their capacity to produce better men. Consequently, and based on his inputs summarized above, I would judge van Klinken as actually and actively taking part in the project of transforming masculinities towards gender justice as fullness of life for all. This is true even if he does so via a critical engagement with the works of theologians and case studies rather than directly challenging men to change, like Chitando, or eliciting agency through religious programs like West.

It can be inferred from the foregoing and from the discussions in the previous chapters that these three scholars have in their own ways contributed immensely to the discourse on masculinities in relation to gender justice. Chitando further contributes by emphasizing in his radical style the urgency and importance of the change that is required of men. What I termed his main claim: that “men can, should and must change!” can be regarded as the foundation from which the other approaches take off. West was able to show that given the space and tool such as CBS, men can change and embrace alternatives that are life-promoting. Van Klinken on his part challenges and shows the need to continually interrogate approaches and ideals so as not to miss out on actual transformations that are taking place in other small-scale religious discourses on masculinities.

All three scholars also open our eyes to the immense power of religion and religious resources in the production of change. Although in the patriarchal frame within which people like Chitando wrote, the tendency is to emphasize more the part that religion plays in the construction of hegemonic masculinities. But even Chitando, like the others, emphasized the ability of religion and religious resources to promote alternative masculinities (Chitando, 2010). While Chitando acknowledges the importance of the Bible in the transformation of masculinities, amongst other resources, West shows how even a single Biblical story such as Tamar's has and can actually result in transformation. He also shows how it can further lead to the discovery and utilization of other cultural and religious resources for transformation of masculinities and society at large. Van Klinken extends this further by demonstrating how in actual fact the Bible through the interpretation of a religious leader and an ancient religious figure are used to actively develop alternative masculinities and to move men in the direction of change. Even if it is within patriarchy, and the discourse was primarily a moral one, it proved to be effective in transforming men.

In the same vein, these scholars have emphasized the need for thinkers on masculinities to also think in terms of alternatives. This is relevant especially if they intend to maintain the activist agenda masculinities discourses are known for (Capraro, 2004:23), whether in terms of transformation of men, equality for women, or the concern of people like Chitando for Africanization by way of making knowledge relevant to issues in the African context. It could be by way of proposing or attempting to lead men towards an ideal alternative like "gender-equitable men" or "redemptive masculinities" as in Chitando and West respectively. It could also be by challenging scholars to appreciate and recognize alternatives that emerge in some local contexts as well as the forces, the process and discourses behind such emergence, as in van Klinken. The challenge is to think in such terms because if the issues of masculinities and their transformation are taken seriously, then all possible effective responses must be explored. It is also very significant that West actually calls attention to the importance of women's perspective and voice in defining dangerous masculinities and opening our eyes to what might be preferable and more effective alternatives as I have discussed in chapter four. Because if we accept that women have been more on the receiving end of domination and dangerous masculinities then their perspective may actually be very insightful as to what might be more life-promoting.

6.3. SUGGESTIONS

In addition to my responses to the writings of individual scholars in each of the preceding three chapters, I wish to emphasize the need to approach masculinities in ways that takes gender relations among men seriously. As discussed in chapter two, Connell suggests that there is a hierarchy in masculinities with the hegemonic group which is actually smaller, being more dominant and also sustaining the dominance of women. Other forms include the subordinated men, men who are complicit and those who are marginalized (Connell, 2005b:77). Taking this hierarchy and disparity within masculinities seriously in religious discourses will allow for a more holistic approach which will also address and interrogate issues relating to LGBTI in terms of masculinity. It may further enhance understanding of issues such as corrective rape, HIV, power issues in religious circles, and many more, from the perspective of masculinities and to address such issues in theory and practice.

Efforts to address masculinities, such as those of the three scholars analyzed in this work, also need to take more seriously what I designate with the common parlance, a “what’s-in-it-for-me” approach. By this I mean it is important to help men see how they stand to benefit from the transformation they are called to. The importance of such an approach has been highlighted by scholars who have shown that patriarchy and dangerous masculinities also have negative effects on men (Cooper-White, 2008; Capraro, 2004; Messner, 1997). Chitando, sets the direction when he writes that men also experience freedom and liberation when they are transformed and work for gender justice (Chitando, 2012a:262) even though this was not a much emphasized theme in his works. Such approaches are very important because if patriarchy is really as pervasive and deep-seated as it is portrayed (Clifford, 2002), what value would advocating for men to change hold to men? How would men respect a call for transformation that seems to be suggesting that its purpose is to make the lives of women better or even make them competitors? Appreciating and without attempting to undermine van Klinken’s call for a different frame of analysis from patriarchy altogether, it is important to emphasize also what men stand to benefit when we call them to change in the face of patriarchy.

Van Klinken, as discussed, suggested that male agency as a frame is more effective in analyzing masculinities in the context of religion. In my judgment, this is quite plausible. But better still,

Bohan's notion of "reflective agency" that emerged in the works of West (2012:186) appears as even more effective if we are to stretch the notion of agency as a frame even further. It emphasizes the capacity in men (and women) not only to change or respond to the call for change, but to actually reflect on, critique, and interpret the state from which they are required to change and to be involved actively in the adoption of alternatives. To my mind, when van Klinken discusses the production of agency in his cases studies, showing how individuals internally deal with and respond to the Christian values, figures and ideals that motivate them to change, and struggling to maintain their new masculinities even in the face of challenges, he does speak more of reflective agency. However, as I stated in my evaluation of van Klinken in chapter five, it would be more effective to have an analytical frame that addresses issues of masculinities and religion both from a structural as well as a more individual level or one that at least can complement other structural approaches without undermining its own effectiveness.

6.4. GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study began with an analytic objective of interpreting the works of three scholars on masculinities in relation to gender justice. Following a careful selection of representative texts, the analysis identified a number of themes and structured these themes using the style of the thematic networks analysis. These themes were discussed in three chapters, one for each scholar, after a theoretical and literature review styled background to the discourse on masculinities both in the West and in Africa. In each of the chapters, a critical response followed the analysis of the works of the scholars where I raised issues around perceived strengths, weaknesses, contestations and other important issues.

In the present chapter, different elements from the individual chapters on each scholar were brought together and engaged with. I demonstrated that in different ways, in different styles and guided by different but, arguably, overlapping concerns, these scholars have contributed immensely to the religious discourse on masculinity in relation to gender justice in African scholarship. This was measured through the utilization of my theoretical framework, namely, theology of gender justice. The same framework also allowed for certain areas that require further attention to emerge. These I have observed and also captured in my proposition on how these writings and similar ones can further be stretched to address issues of masculinities in relation to gender justice and thereby make even greater contribution both in theory and practice.

This study can be taken further in many ways. One of such ways is to use a research design that employs qualitative-empirical methods rather than textual. This would allow face-to-face in-depth interviews with these scholars to enhance a better understanding of their writings and to be able to address questions around their identities, background, personal lives and social status, and how these shape their thinking and engagement with issues of masculinities.

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