

A SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CONTEMPORARY CHILD MARRIAGE IN
MABVUKU, HARARE, ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

Child marriage is a phenomenon that has been increasingly recognised as a global problem since the late nineteenth century. Since then, scholars across many disciplines along with various agencies such as government bodies and non-governmental organisations have tirelessly engaged in research exploring the causes and consequences of this practice and in developing prevention and mitigation strategies. These research efforts have been concentrated in some parts of the world and not others, with the findings in many cases being generalised problematically across different geographical areas. This thesis stands as a response to the dearth of academic research on child marriage in present-day Zimbabwe and simultaneously highlights the significance of studying the specificities of child marriage under particular historical and spatial conditions.

The main objective of this thesis is to explore and understand child marriage as a part of modern-day marriage practices in Zimbabwe, through a case study of child marriage in Mabvuku in Harare. In addressing this objective, it is hoped that new ways of thinking around this phenomenon will become evident. In addressing this main objective, the thesis considers the experiences of child brides, the drivers and consequences of child and post-child marriage experiences. It does this seeking to understand child marriage with reference to the types of marital unions which exist amongst Shona people in pre-colonial times and in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The thesis adopts a qualitative research methodology which involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with 25 women in Mabvuku who were married before the age of 18, along with focus group discussions with community workers and interviews with pertinent government and non-government representatives. Due to certain challenges with current theorising about child marriage, there is an attempt to build theory by drawing upon in particular the Zimbabwean notion and practice of *hunhu*. A key conclusion is that child marriage in present-day Zimbabwe is in part a result of family transitions which arose during the time of colonialism and continue to this day.

DEDICATION

Hakuzi kugona kwangu Baba asi ndekwenyu.

My heavenly Father, this work has not been in vain; may it be used in the transformation of family life through your kingdom.

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There were many people involved in making the completion of this thesis a reality, some in terms of technical capacities and others as pillars of support and encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

According to the most recent United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) global data, 650 million women alive today were married before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2018). Whilst this figure appears shocking now, there was a time in history where no one would have given it a second thought. In the western world, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought about social change that saw new perceptions of childhood and marriage transform what was previously a common and acceptable practice to a disturbing social ill that needs to be addressed (Syrett, 2016; Coontz, 2005). I speak here of the practice of child marriage. As the twentieth century progressed the idea of child marriage as a problem spread out across the globe, gathering momentum and spewing out not only into the social sphere but also into political and programmatic spheres, peaking in 2013 with the United Nations Human Rights Council’s recognition of child marriage not only as a global problem but as a violation of human rights as well (Robels, 2013). Following this, child marriage also became highly profiled as an obstacle to global development. Come 2015, child marriage made it onto the global United Nations (UN) development agenda as one of the targets to be met under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Girls Not Brides, 2017a). As the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) phrased it, “for as long as child marriage continues to exist, so will poverty and instability, violence against women and girls, high global maternal mortality rates, and an ever widening educational gap between the poorest and wealthiest nations” (2017, par 1). Ear-marked as a human rights violation and a development issue, the practice of child marriage continues to be attacked across the globe, with statistics showing that despite the decline of child marriage around the world, much work still needs to be done particularly to meet the ambitious target to eliminate child marriage by 2030 as set out in the SDGs (United Republic of Tanzania, 2017; Wylie, 2018).

1.2 Child marriage, human rights and the development agenda

Over the last 30 years we have witnessed the growing engagement between human rights and development practitioners. This engagement comes as a result of the growing convergence between the two fields, as the realisation finally set in that human rights form an intrinsic part of

development and development can be harnessed as a means to achieving human rights (United Nations Development Programme, 2000). In other words, it has become clear that the issues of human rights and development sit on two sides of the same coin.

As the scope of the development field expanded beyond economic growth to cover issues such as human and social development, poverty reduction and inequality, the development agenda found itself aligning with the already broad scope of the human rights agenda as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Canuto, 2011). As stated in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report, a common vision and purpose is shared by both human rights and human development agendas and this is “to secure, for every human being, freedom, well-being and dignity” (2000:1). The development agenda pushes for this vision to be met through the realisation of seven basic freedoms such as the “freedom from want”, “the freedom to develop and realise one’s potential” and the “freedom from fear of threats to one’s personal security” (UNDP, 2000:1). These freedoms are met through access to shelter, health care and education for example, which are concerns also held within the human rights frameworks (UNDP, 2000). The seven freedoms relate to human rights in that human rights are critical for their achievement as it is only through political freedom, i.e. the right for equal participation in society, that people can genuinely take advantage of these freedoms (UNDP, 2000).

Given that child marriage allows for girls and boys who have not reached their full age (18) to marry, this practice violates the right for men and women of full age to marry and found a family after having given their free and full consent,(UN, 2019). The use of the terms ‘child’ and ‘marriage’ or ‘bride’ together (as in child-marriage or child-bride) is fraught with tension in modern day society as it is contradictory given that, according to the global human rights framework, children are not able to consent to marriage. As a researcher I remained conscious of this contradiction, but made use of the phrases ‘child marriage’ and ‘child bride’ simply because it is critical in giving clarity to the issue being discussed. Child marriage does not only violate a single human right but every case of child marriage “triggers a continuum of violations that continues throughout a girl’s life”, ultimately affecting their human development (Centre for Reproductive Rights, 2013: 10; UNDP, 2000).These violated rights include the right to education, the right to freedom from gender-based violence, and rights to health and equality

(Girls Not Brides, 2019). The violation of these rights is recognised as going beyond each individual girl, with the effects accumulating in such a way that child marriage is then said to stand in the way of the progress to meet at least eight of the seventeen 2030 global goals of the UN which relate to poverty, hunger, health, gender equality, inclusive education, economic growth, the reduction of inequalities and global peace as shown in Table 1 (Girls Not Brides, 2017a). According to CAMFED (2017), climate change can also be added to this list. The consequences of child marriage therefore impede development on a global, national and personal level as shown by the examples in the table below (United Republic of Tanzania, 2017). Achieving the SDG target 5.3 to “eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations” by 2030 is therefore crucial to global development.

Table 1: Linkages between child marriage and the United Nations 2030 Agenda

| Sustainable Development Goal | Link to Child Marriage |
|---|--|
| Goal 1 – No Poverty | Child marriage is linked to higher household poverty and is likely to perpetuate intergenerational cycles of poverty due to lower earning potential |
| Goal 2 – Zero Hunger | Child brides are more likely to go hungry due to lower earning potential brought about by limited education |
| Goal 3 – Good health and Wellbeing | Child marriage is linked to various health issues such as malnutrition, poor maternal health, pregnancy related complications linked to early child birth, maternal and infant mortality |
| Goal 4 – Quality Education | Child marriage is a barrier to girls’ education |
| Goal 5 – Gender Equality | Child marriage is rooted in gender inequality, achieving this goal is therefore hinged on ending child marriage |
| Goal 8 – Economic Growth | Women who were married before 18 are less likely to enter the workforce due to educational barriers |
| Goal 10 – Reduce Inequalities | Child marriage reinforces inequalities as it affects some populations disproportionately e.g. rural communities, and the poor |
| Goal 13 – Climate Action | Child marriage limits women’s potential to help solve global crises because of educational barriers |
| Goal 16 – Justice, Peace and Strong Institutions | Child marriage is a form of violence and is also linked to other forms of violence such as sexual and gender based violence |

Source: Girls not Brides (2017a); CAMFED (2017).

Child marriage is generally viewed as a product of patriarchy and patriarchal societies as the issue of gender inequality – which is at the core of child marriage – is ingrained within patriarchal structures in many societies (Backlund & Blomqvist, 2014). These patriarchal structures are based on traditional gender norms that limit girls’ futures and future options through their systematic neglect of girls in social, economic, political, legal and educational spheres (Gage, 2007). This neglect is linked to the issue of male preference which starts at a young age, with issues such as choosing to educate and invest in boys instead of girls and desiring to control girls and their sexuality. It is often the case that the neglect is driven either by the common belief that girls are not as valuable as boys and are only useful for child rearing, child care and domestic work, or by the preference for male children as males carry forward the family name.

In patrilocal societies, men have a fixed place within the social order and therefore wives reside with their husbands and become attached to their husband’s lineage, often dropping their own surname and picking up the husband’s surname. It is therefore believed that the male will always feed resources into his family line while girls will ‘shift their loyalties’ towards their husband’s lineage once they are married, thus making it less appealing to invest in the girl child (Arnold, Choe & Roy, 1998; Shah, 2005; Gage, 2007). The result of this neglect is the fostering of conditions that put girls at future risk of child marriage and also limits their potential to break into the economic, political and legal spheres in meaningful ways (Gage, 2007; Rosi & Rouanet, 2014; Manyonganise, 2015). Even where women are educated and equally qualified, patriarchal structures which have for centuries painted men as being better leaders and better suited for certain positions create barriers for women and limit their progress.

1.3 Research rationale, objective and significance

In the past 10 years the rate of child marriage has decreased by about 15% due to the accelerated progress towards ending child marriage. As it stands, around 12 million girls are married before their 18th birthday each year, which translates to a rate of approximately 1 in 5 girls who are married by the age of 18 as compared to the previous decade’s 1 in 4 (Wylie, 2018; UNICEF, 2018). This decline is largely due to progress made mostly in South Asia where the risk of child marriage has dropped by more than a third, bringing sub-Saharan Africa very close to becoming

the region with the highest prevalence of child marriage given its modest decline in the region (UNICEF, 2018). Research shows that if the decrease of child marriage does not accelerate within sub-Saharan Africa, there is the risk that by 2050 the number of child brides in this region would have doubled (UNICEF, 2014). It is within this context that the need arises for “a social science that is responsive to the pressing issues of the day and that plays an active role in promoting social change” (Kelman, 1968: 77), in such a way that it translates “personal problems into public issues, and public issues into the terms of their human meaning for a variety of individuals” (Mills, 1973: 207). Given the size of the spotlight on the issue of child marriage, significant research has already been carried out in an attempt to understand not only the trends but the drivers of child marriage as well, as this is key to effective and strengthened policy and programmatic efforts to end child marriage. However, gaps remain, leaving room for additional knowledge to be created, particularly with reference to developing countries.

The 2017 State of the World’s Children report published by UNICEF showed that the child marriage prevalence¹ rates amongst girls married below 15 and below 18 in Zimbabwe stood at 6% and 32%, respectively, while the global average was 2% and 7% lower. Although these percentages may not appear to be high and have in fact declined over the years, the decline has been very slow and major work still needs to be done to end child marriage in the country. This sentiment was recently echoed by Zimbabwe’s First Lady Auxilia Mnangagwa who held a stakeholders meeting in November 2018 to encourage the various stakeholders working on child marriage to work together to draw up practical and lasting solutions to address child marriage (Chikwati, 2018).

To effectively address a problem, one must first understand it. Conclusions from an expert group meeting organised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to discuss research priorities on ending child marriage and supporting married girls stated that there are many research gaps and priorities, particularly in five key areas, namely, (i) prevalence and trends of child marriage, (ii) causes of child marriage, (iii) consequences of child marriage, (iv) efforts to prevent child marriage and (v) efforts to support married girls (Svanemyr, Mouli, Raj, Travers & Sundaram, 2015). Although some of these areas have already received more focus than others, the expert

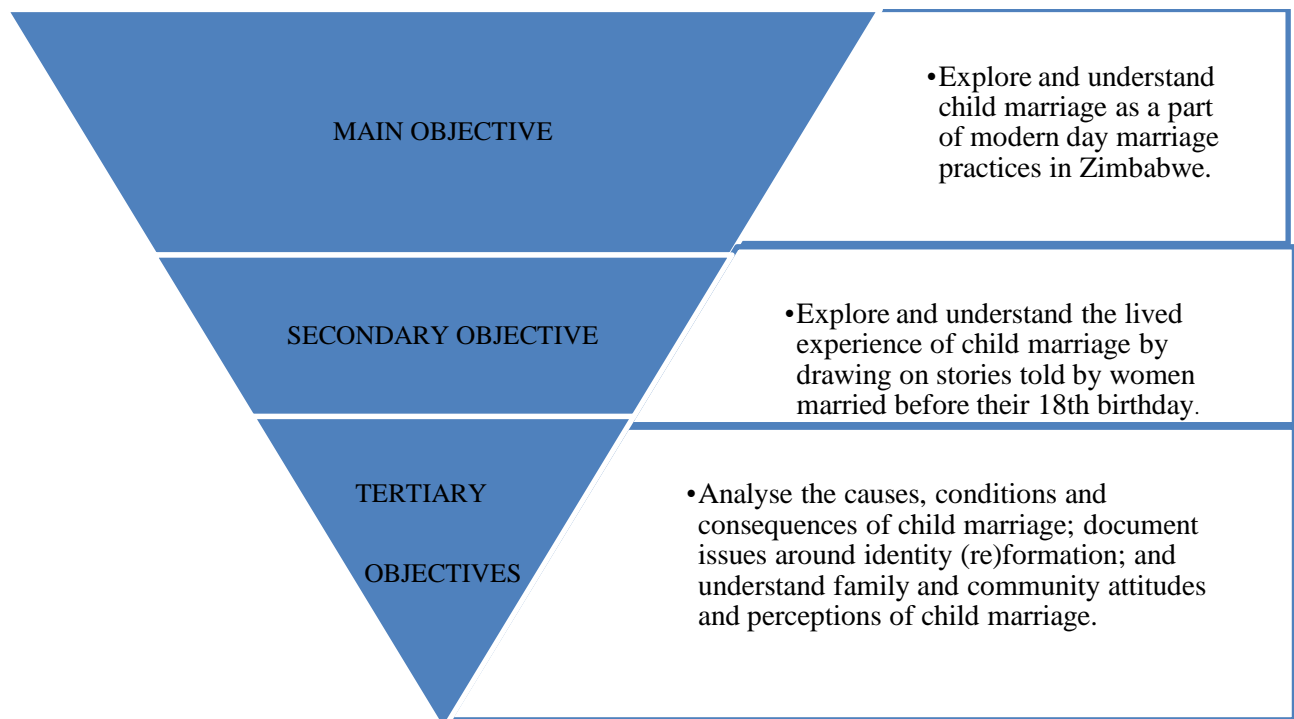
¹ This prevalence rate is based on the percentage of 20 to 24-year old women who were married or in a union before they turned 18.

group highlighted areas within each of these categories where additional research is required. A review of Zimbabwean literature on child marriage also corroborated this position.

As various stakeholders in Zimbabwe come together in an increased effort to fight against child marriage, it is important to develop a more robust knowledge base that focuses on addressing critical empirical gaps within the sphere of child marriage. Though some academic research has been carried out on child marriage in Zimbabwe, this research is limited and the voice of those who have been through the experience of child marriage is often missing. When I began this study my intention was to address the issue of these missing voices. This was to be done by putting together a thesis which focuses on presenting some of the voices in an attempt to enhance the understanding of child marriage as an experience and ultimately export the personal “problem” into one which can be viewed in a broader societal context thus uncovering potential areas for social change.

Clearly stated, when the study began, the objective of this research was to explore and understand the lived experiences of child marriage, drawing on stories told by young women who were married before their 18th birthday. However, as I carried out my fieldwork and engaged in an ongoing and simultaneous process of data analysis, I found my study taking me in a different and more intriguing direction. Following the lead of my data into what appears to be uncharted waters, I then found it critical to restructure the main objective of my research so as to explore the issue of child marriage as a personal experience within the broader context of family transition and marriage as a whole. While my main objective then changed to the one mentioned below (in Figure 1), I retained my original primary and secondary objectives as a part of the research but simply moved them down in terms of levels of importance. My research objectives thus sit on three tiers as shown below.

Figure 1: Thesis Objectives



To highlight, then, my main objective of the thesis is *to explore and understand child marriage as a part of modern-day marriage practices in Zimbabwe.*

1.4 Research methods and procedures

This section outlines the research methods and procedures used during this study. In doing so, the research methodology is laid out alongside the sampling, data collecting and analysis methods, and the ethical considerations. The last section acknowledges the challenges faced along with the potential weaknesses of this study.

1.4.1 Research methodology

This research was taken as an opportunity “to create new and theoretically expressed understandings” of social life based on first hand experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 8). With that in mind, this study was conducted using a grounded theory approach. The grounded theory approach places emphasis on giving a true representation of reality by allowing theory to emerge from the data collected. Although several guidelines and steps have been suggested for use by researchers embarking on a grounded theory study, the grounded theory approach is a flexible

research approach in which one needs to not strictly adhere to methodological dogmas but can tailor the approach to meet specific research needs (Stern & Porr, 2011). According to Kushner and Morrow (2003), the use of this flexible approach to research is “intended to result in the generation of knowledge that contributes to meaningful understandings and explanations of human interaction in the social world” (cited in Stern & Porr, 2011: 31). That is to say, the approach is meant to lead to an explanatory theory, which could potentially contribute towards transformation or at the very least “provide a meaningful guide to action” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 12).

The word ‘theory’ is defined differently by different researchers (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the case of this study, I use the term (at least in the first instance) to refer to a series of explanatory hypotheses that I put forward in my concluding chapter to possibly understand the position of child marriage in modern-day Zimbabwe (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). This theory not only “describes how certain conditions lead to certain actions and interactions” but also “how those actions and interactions lead to other actions” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 141), with these points relevant to the conditions leading to child marriage and the ensuing activities of child brides.

While this study was sensitive to the significance of the grounded theory approach, there is also the requirement of provisional theories in degree-based research processes. Thus, instead of going into the field with absolutely no pre-conceived theories as expected when using an extreme grounded theory approach, I experimented with the combined use of grounded theory (rooted in interpretive methodologies) and general theoretical frameworks. This type of combination of approaches within one study is becoming more common amongst contemporary researchers as predicted by Strauss and Corbin (1994), and it should not be confused with the slurring of approaches (Baker, Wuest & Stern, 1992). Eisenhardt (1989) also put forward that grounded theory need not necessarily involve engaging in the research process with a blank slate but could instead be carried out after putting together *a priori* constructs which later provide better grounding of constructed measures and can be compared to constructs emerging from the evidence.

During the course of this study, I carried out two sets of literature reviews consistent with the thoughts of Stern and Porr (2011). The first literature review, which they refer to as the primary review, served to guide me through the proposal writing process as well as the construction of

the research instruments. The primary review confirmed that the proposed research area had not been sufficiently investigated already and also pointed me towards a number of constructs (for example gender, self-esteem and poverty) which emerge in existing child marriage research. These constructs were used to direct me towards a number of general theoretical frameworks which could be used provisionally in contextualising the research analytically without necessarily imposing these frameworks on the evidence. These broad theories included a social norms perspective of child marriage, feminist theory and biographical disruption theory. As it turned out, only the social norms perspective was relevant for this study and it was used to flexibly engage with the collected data and other emergent theories in order to densify and deepen the analysis (Urquhart, 2013).

The second review, which Stern and Porr (2011) refer to as the evolving review, occurred alongside my data analysis as I sought additional literature which I could use for analytical purposes alongside my findings. This literature, which was mostly on the structure of the family, the changes in family structure over the years and the results of these changes, became some of the key data used in exploring the way child marriage fits into modern marriage practices. By drawing on this literature I was able to verify that my study was consistent with grounded theory by “going beyond what is already known and by producing accessible and usable theory” (Stern & Porr, 2011: 50).

The thesis objective required that I delve in an indeterminate manner into the personal, lived experiences of child brides. With that in mind, this study rested on the use of an interpretive sociology which was essential in order for me to construct interpretations of the collective social practice of child marriage by using the experiences, perceptions, perspectives and understandings of child marriage uncovered through qualitative data collection (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Urquhart, 2013). These interpretations cannot necessarily be generalised given the small sample size. However, this is not to say they are not useful or relevant in exploring child marriage on a larger scale within Zimbabwe or in societies with similar characteristics, as it is possible that they can be transferred to similar contexts under study. Additionally, this study could be used as a starting point to brainstorm about other studies that further explore the effect of family transitions on the transformation of marriage and other key areas of life in Zimbabwe.

1.4.2 Sampling

Given the various research populations engaged with during this study, I made use of a combination of two non-probability sampling techniques, namely purposive and snowball sampling (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006).

Purposive sampling was used to firstly identify possible non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and governmental bodies with which to engage, which was followed by identifying and approaching key individuals within those entities. These individuals provided me with additional information on the work they do around the issue of child marriage and also arranged for relevant participants (i.e. child brides) to take part in my research or for community child care workers (CCWs) to assist me with identifying participants, once again making use of purposive sampling. All in all, 25 former child brides were interviewed as key informants. All key informants were members of the largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe, the Shona. Given this, the literature included in this research speaks to marriage practices amongst the Shona.

To add on to this data, I also interviewed two representatives from ChildLine Zimbabwe which is a child rights private voluntary organisation (PVO), one representative from Musasa Project which is an NGO offering services to survivors of gender based violence, one representative from the Department of Social Welfare at the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, one representative from the Zimbabwe Republic Police Victim Friendly Unit, six community care workers in Mabvuku and one founder of a community-based organisation in Epworth. Three focus group discussions were also carried out with CCWs. The data collected from all other sources besides the former child brides was used to broaden my understanding of what happens on the ground, including community perceptions of marriage and child marriage and the ways in which this issue is dealt with by different stakeholders. These understandings ultimately fed into my analysis and added more depth to the exploration of the issue at hand.

1.4.3 Research permissions

To carry out research in Zimbabwe, one must obtain permission from relevant ministries and government bodies which oversee the research areas. Given that the issue of child marriage is a sensitive one which is dealt with across different ministries and government bodies, I also had to approach these custodians before entering the field. Obtaining permission from the relevant

bodies was a tedious process in some cases as my application letters kept being misplaced resulting in duplicate applications needing to be filed.

At the highest level, my research had to be approved by the Secretary of Local Government, Public Works and Social Housing as this ministry governs all local authorities in Zimbabwe. These local authorities serve as the entry points for access to the grassroots. Permission also had to be granted by both the Permanent Secretary for Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development and the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare as these are the custodians of children and women's issues. Clearance from these ministries paved the way for me to officially begin engagements with former child brides, representatives from various organisations, government bodies and the Zimbabwe Republic Police. The last three also needed additional requests for permission sent to personnel in managerial positions within the specific body. The letters I sent included an outline of the research topic, objective and relevance along with a copy of my research proposal, research instruments and proof of registration as a student. Upon approving my requests to carry out this study, all relevant bodies also indicated that I am only permitted to use the data collected for academic purposes. They also requested that I submit a copy of my thesis upon completion of the study.

1.4.4 Research area

This study was conducted in Zimbabwe which is a land-locked country in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the 2017 Intercensal Demographic Survey, there are approximately 13 572 560 people living in Zimbabwe and 99% of this population is Zimbabwean by citizenship. Zimbabwe has a youthful population structure as over 60% of the population is below the age of 25. As well, 84% of the population regards themselves as Christian (ZIMSTAT, 2017).

Zimbabwe is divided into 10 administrative provinces, with the capital city, Harare, forming what is known as Harare Metropolitan Province. It is within this province that my research took place. Harare is the largest province in Zimbabwe, holding 1 973 906 people which translates to 14.5% of the country's population (ZIMSTAT, 2017). Despite being urban and considered the most developed province in the country, Harare Metropolitan Province also faces several challenges including overpopulation, poor residential accommodation delivery, poor water provision infrastructures and various social vices such as prostitution (Parliament of Zimbabwe,

2011). These challenges are often located in areas inhabited by a predominantly black population of low income earners. Owing to the history of the development of Harare, these locations are based mostly in areas south and west of the central business district.

The city of Harare, formerly Salisbury has colonial roots. It was founded as a fort in 1890 by a group of mercenaries organised by Cecil Rhodes who led the invading Pioneer column. At its inception, British migrants, also known as pioneer columns or settlers, made up 90% of the non-African population (Muronda, 2008). From its inception the city was deeply and intentionally divided along racial lines (Kay, 1974). Initially African labourers who were used to drive the agro-economy were kept out of the urban centre but as the city grew so did the need for semi-skilled labourers, particularly “from the marginalised black community who had been forcefully dispossessed from their land during the colonial occupation by the pioneer column” (Muronda, 2008: 38). As the number of African workers in the urban centre increased, the colonial regime began setting up residential locations or suburbs to house them, the oldest of which is Mbare which was set up in 1907. By the time 1979 (the year before political independence) came around, ten additional residential areas had been developed strictly for black or African people. These suburbs were located on small patches of land on the outskirts of the city, far away from the white settlers who lived in the northern suburbs. In modern day Zimbabwe, disparities still exist between the northern and southern suburbs. However, instead of the spatial structure being drawn along the lines of racial composition it is now based on economic stratification: black low-income earners inhabit the previously African residential areas which are now referred to as high density areas and the black and white high income earners live in the previously white residential areas now known as low density areas, and the middle income group exist somewhere in-between (Zinyama, 1993; Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2011).

The urban residential area of Mabvuku where my fieldwork was conducted was established in 1952 as one of the ten strictly black residential areas. Of these strictly black residential areas, Mabvuku is the only one east of Harare but living conditions were and still are similar to other high density suburbs.

Over the years, child marriage has been identified as one of the social ills plaguing high density areas in Harare. Epworth, which borders Mabvuku has particularly caught the attention of many, with NGOs and government bodies flooding in to work on the issue (*The Herald*, 2015, August

1). As I interacted with one of the founders of a community based organisation working mostly in Epworth, he informed me that the cases of child marriage in neighbouring residential areas such as Mabvuku, Tafara and Caledonia were also high. It is through going into the field with his help that I then settled on Mabvuku as my research site as this was his own community and he was better able to facilitate access to potential participants in this area.

1.4.5 Data collection

Data collection was carried out from August 2017 to July 2018. Semi-structured in depth interviews were conducted with 20 Shona women between the ages of 18 and 25 and five women above the age of 35 to “understand their individual lives in detail and how the individual plays various roles in society” over time along with identifying the “threads and links that connect one part of a person’s life to another, that connect childhood to adulthood” (Atkinson, 2002: 123, 126). Interviews ranged between 20 minutes to an hour with the length of time the interview lasted being linked not only to the participants’ willingness to discuss their life but their age as well. Older participants were more likely to include much more detail around their experiences and generally also had more experiences to speak about. The interviews were a mix of light hearted tales of the foolishness of young love and heart wrenching stories of neglect, abuse and poor decisions that led into marriages that were later regretted.

Six CCWs between the ages of 35 and 60 were also interviewed and three of these had also been married before their 18th birthday. The workers spoke about their involvement in the community and the interactions they have with young women who are in different states of vulnerability. Along with this, some also shared tales from their own lives.

Interviews were held in a combination of Shona and English. The interviews were recorded with permission from the participants and transcription was carried out in the language relevant to each portion of the recording. Segments which were in Shona were only translated if necessary; for example, in the case that a direct quote was then used in the empirical chapters.

The interviews with government officials and other representatives were also semi-structured and formulated in a way that allowed for the responses from key informants (i.e. women married before 18) to be placed within a broader socio-economic and political context. Information gathered included the ways in which the state and various partners such as non-governmental

organisations handle cases of child marriage once reported and also the challenges faced in trying to prosecute those responsible.

Two focus group discussions were also held with CCWs who had gathered for a district meeting and a third I arranged on a day the workers were gathered for activities. The focus groups were used to further explore community perceptions of child marriage, with these community workers not only sharing details about the various ways in which communities' view child marriages that occur within and around them, but also noting specific cases of child marriage they had encountered in their work.

Finally, I also drew upon relevant primary documents during the research. These included various United Nations documents in the form of human rights frameworks, treaties, conventions and reports on child marriage. Nationwide demographic surveys, child marriage reports and policy briefs published by the Parliament of Zimbabwe were also used alongside the various treaties and conventions to which the country is party.

1.4.6 Data analysis

Data analysis was based on a number of suggestions and guidelines put forward by Charmaz (2006) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). Analysis began right after the first few interviews and continued up until the close of the thesis write up, as is required of a study conducted using a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As more data was collected, the analysis continued simultaneously with recordings being reviewed and notes made for each of the interviews. Notes included the emerging themes and the contexts in which these themes were created (Stern & Porr, 2011). This process of open coding later gave way to more focused coding after the data collection process was complete. This was because I needed to make sure I had not missed any links between participants' narrations of their experiences. *In-vivo* coding which makes use of "participants' special terms" was also useful in pulling out important and recurring themes from the interviews (Charmaz, 2006: 85). Some of these codes are used in the presentation and analysis of findings in later chapters to "preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions" particularly regarding the details around how they entered into marriage (Charmaz, 2006: 85). The analysis of the data is also based on excerpts thus ensuring the voices

of the respondents are included in drawing the interpretations of their experiences as is required of a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

By the time 20 participants had been interviewed, it was clear that certain themes kept repeating themselves. In search of additional information, I then decided to expand my research further and include a small number (five) of women above my initial target population of girls aged between 18 and 25. It is also at this point that I interviewed the six CCWs who had helped me by gathering child brides. The purpose of these interviews was for me to gain a community perspective of child marriage from those who actually spent time with these women and knew them personally. In interviewing these women, it turned out that three of them had also been married before their 18th birthday and similar themes emerged to those uncovered from data collected from the 25 women.

As the analysis of data continued, literature was incorporated into the analysis in some cases to confirm knowledge that is already in the field and in some cases to refine it (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this process, memos were written and diagrams drawn which led to a process of theoretical coding through which I uncovered a way in which my substantive codes related to each other and converged around the issue of *hunhu* and family structure, thus creating hypotheses that could potentially be integrated into a theory (Charmaz, 2006). It is at this point that I sought to expand on this idea by making it the central point of my study. This led to me seeking further insight on how cases of child abuse and child marriage are dealt with by local authorities who step in where family structures have failed. With this in mind, I interviewed representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, who led me to an additional three bodies which work closely with this Ministry in tackling these issues; these are the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), Musasa Project and ChildLine Zimbabwe.

1.4.7 Ethical considerations and research challenges

This study followed the university's research protocol, with the relevant ethics clearance having been obtained. All research subjects in this study (including all former child brides) were over the age of 18 and pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis to protect the identity of the respondents. In cases where the use of pseudonyms could still result in a participant's identity

being known due to their residential information or other distinguishing factors, these have been left out or modified in a way that does not negatively affect the presentation of the findings.

Before agreeing to take part in the study, all participants were given an overview of the study and informed of how the data collected would be used. They were also informed of their right to end the interview at any point or to refuse to answer certain questions. Participants were asked for permission to record the interview, to which all participants agreed. Participants provided verbal consent for the interviews and this was recorded at the beginning of each session as some participants could not read, while others were reluctant to have their names and contact information written down on the forms I had with me.

Initially my research was meant to be conducted in Mashonaland Central Province and Bulawayo Province which have the highest and lowest prevalence of child marriage, respectively. Due to various challenges faced once having entered the field, such as limited resources and difficulty in accessing participants in remote areas, the study was then reworked so that it could be carried out within Harare Metropolitan Province where high rates of child marriage exist in high density areas and yet academic or other studies about child brides in these areas are not readily available. Letters requesting permission to carry out the research had stated Mashonaland Central and Bulawayo as the study sites, which then required me to carry out lengthy explanations as to why my research area had shifted as I interacted with the various organisations and government bodies I sought to get information from (particularly the ZRP). Identifying a representative of the ZRP Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) to interview was also a long process as officers were not sure how to go about selecting someone given the lack of clear guidelines on the issue. However, all these challenges were overcome and ultimately had no effect on my ability to carry out the study.

1.5 Theoretical framework

Research on child marriage across the globe has led to several explanations of the drivers of child marriage along with various interventions and monitoring and evaluation tools for measuring progress made against ending child marriage. What was missing in this field of inquiry was a theoretical framework which effectively integrates the various explanations of child marriage and forms the foundation of the interventions and monitoring tools (Bicchieri,

Jiang & Lindemans, 2014). In trying to draw out a theoretical framework which can be used in the categorisation of the causes of child marriage it became clear that there was already a theoretical framework that seemed “appropriate to the area of investigation” even though I did not come across any instances where it had been previously used (Strauss & Corbin, 1994:273).

The lack of theoretical rigour in child marriage research was officially acknowledged by Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindemans (2014) who noted that child marriage was often randomly earmarked as a custom, a social norm, a culture, an institution, a convention, a practice or a moral imperative. They responded to this by coming up with a general theoretical framework for child marriage which takes into account the various factors that can sustain a collective practice, distinguishing between factors such as cultural practices, moral imperatives and the other factors listed above. This theory, which they call the social norms perspective, was created in such a way that although it is “sufficiently general to include all partial explanations” of child marriage, it is also solid enough to use in the development of systematic approaches to monitor child marriage (Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindemans, 2014: 3).

Having started my research from a grounded theory perspective which allowed me to make use of my empirical data to guide the formulation of my theoretical framework, I found that the sociological theories and concepts that usually come to mind when one looks at the topic of marriage, family life or childhood with regards to the girl child could not adequately explore the experiences of the same in Zimbabwe as far as child marriage is concerned. While patriarchy and feminist theory for example are usually useful in such studies, I felt it necessary to instead opt for the use of more unconventional and yet useful theoretical frameworks, that is, the above-mentioned general theoretical framework on child marriage (i.e., social norms perspective), the concept of *hunhu* as a dialogical moral theory and the family life course perspective. This section outlines this general theoretical framework along with the notion of *hunhu/ubuntu*, and the family life course perspective, the last of which forms the core of this study.

1.5.1 The social norms perspective

Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindemans’ theoretical framework on child marriage is based on their belief that “the collective practice of child marriage is ultimately a cluster of individual behaviours”, meaning that by gaining an understanding of why individuals behave in certain ways, one would

also gain an understanding of child marriage itself (2014: 3). I identified this framework as being relevant in helping to understand how the decisions of child brides are affected by and affect their lived experiences as it is “based on insights into how individuals make decisions” and “explains the behaviour of individuals... by the preferences they have, the options they have to choose from and the beliefs they have about these options” (Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindemans, 2014:3). The framework takes into consideration not only the girl’s decision making processes but also those of parents who can sometimes sustain the practice of child marriage even when they mean well and only want the best possible outcome for their daughters.

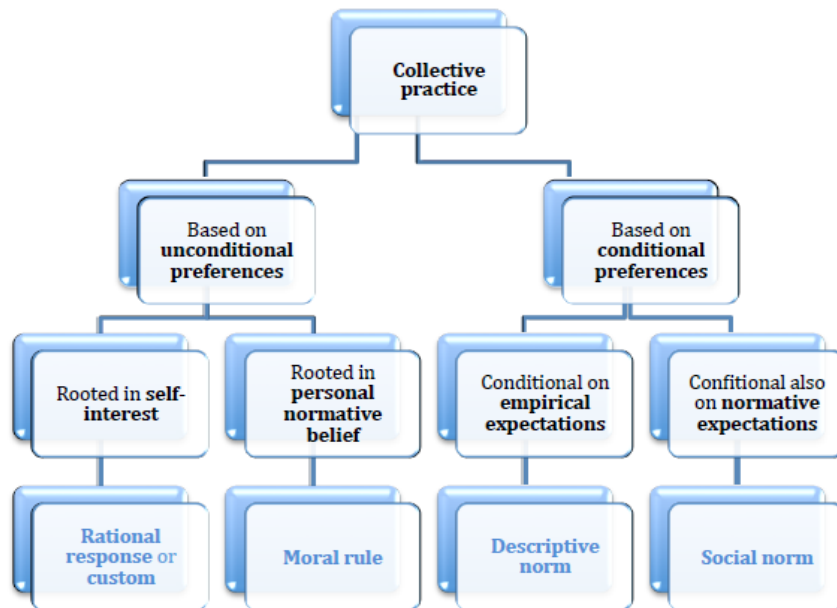
Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindemans’ social norms perspective stems from an economic model that argues that behaviours of individuals are a result of their attempts to “maximally satisfy their preferences given limited options” (2014: 6). Ultimately, two types of preferences and two types of beliefs were identified as sustaining the collective practice of child marriage. The two preferences are unconditional and conditional preferences and the two types of beliefs are non-social beliefs and social expectations. Unconditional preferences are linked to non-social beliefs which are rooted in self-interest and personal beliefs. Unconditional preferences include self-regarding preferences which are founded on self-interest and one’s own well-being, other-regarding preferences which are founded on the well-being of others, and moral preferences which are founded on personal normative beliefs surrounding good behaviour. Examples of each, respectively, include marrying one’s daughter to receive bride wealth (self-regarding), marrying one’s daughter in an attempt to secure a better life for her (other-regarding) and marrying one’s daughter based on a personal moral preference for the daughter to be married as a virgin. Conditional preferences on the other hand are those that are dependent on beliefs surrounding what others believe or expect to be done, and beliefs surrounding what other people do. In other words, conditional preferences are linked to social expectations (Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindemans, 2014). An example of this is parents marrying their daughter at a certain age because they believe this is what others expect to be done and they also believe this is what others do.

The model below (Figure 2) clearly shows how various combinations of preferences and beliefs lead to explanations of child marriage falling into five different categories, namely:

- Rational responses followed in a quest to fulfil one’s interests.
- Customs carried out blindly because that is what people have been taught for centuries.

- Moral rules based on personal beliefs that the rules should be followed.
- Social norms driven by expectations that others think the rules should be followed.
- Descriptive norms driven only by empirical expectations rooted in the beliefs that others follow the same set of rules (Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindemans, 2014).

Figure 2: Categorisation of Collective Practices and Beliefs



Source: Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindemans (2014).

To understand the way in which these categories differ from each other it is important to understand the differences between a custom, a moral rule, a descriptive norm and a social norm. In this instance I use the same definitions used by Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindemans (2014), as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Different Types of Collective Practices and Examples

| | Definition | Example |
|------------------|---|--|
| Custom | A rule usually blindly followed by people but quickly abandoned where it no longer serves their interests. | A girl marrying young because it's considered a tradition. |
| Moral rule | A rule followed because people believe that it should be followed, in other words this is a personal normative believe. | A girl deciding to get married because of her belief that young unmarried people should not engage in sex. |
| Descriptive norm | A rule that is followed simply because of the belief that others follow it, in other words this is based on an empirical expectation | A girl marrying young because she believes that others are doing it too. |
| Social norm | A rule of behaviour to which individuals prefer to conform, based on the condition that they believe that within their relevant social network most people will conform to this believe and also that most people think that others ought to do the same. | A girl marrying young because of the belief that others are doing it too and others think it should be done to ensure girls are virgins before marriage. |

Source: Adapted from Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindesman (2014).

As my empirical data unfolded it became apparent that the personal normative beliefs, empirical expectations and normative expectations held by research participants and those around them seemed to be embedded in a common ground of consciousness that is believed to be shared amongst all African or Bantu peoples despite the cultural variations across Africa (Sibanda,

2014). In Zimbabwe, this consciousness is regarded as an essential part of the Zimbabwean identity and is referred to as *hunhu*. *Hunhu* is said to be at the very core of every *muShona* and, as stated by Jonge (1981), a *muShona* could never exist outside of this spiritual consciousness because it “was the beginning and end of everything in the community” (cited in Chiwome, 1994: 63). While the outward display of *hunhu* in Zimbabwe has been affected by colonialism and modernity, this consciousness is still said to exist even by the layman who makes reference to it regularly in everyday life.

Over the years, the concept of *hunhu* has moved from being out-rightly rejected by some as “an inappropriate basis for a public morality” (Metz, 2011: 532) due to its vagueness and linkages with small-scale pastoral and other communities, to being accepted by many as a legitimate philosophical principle (Samkange & Samkange, 1980; Chimuka, 2000; Ramose, 2005; Broodryk, 2006; Sibanda, 2014), and accepted by others still as a theoretical framework for African/Zimbabwean studies (Metz, 2007; Metz & Gaie, 2010; Mungwini, 2011; Mangena, 2012). In a bid to ensure the use of a contextually relevant theoretical framework, I embraced *hunhu* as a valid theoretical framework for this study, confident that it would guide an enquiry that takes into consideration the context in which my participants’ experiences were constructed, ultimately allowing for the exploration of my empirical data in the most meaningful way (Held, 2007).

1.5.2 *Hunhu* as a dialogical moral theory

The term *hunhu/ubuntu* refers to a common consciousness which is said to connect each and every individual to the community around them, linking their expectations and beliefs to their morality and norms. This common consciousness is said to allow individuals to have good ethics and uphold “African [Zimbabwean] cultural standards, expectations, values and norms”, thereby maintaining the African [Zimbabwean] identity (Sibanda, 2014: 26). Additionally, *hunhu* is also said to ultimately lead to one possessing a good character and being ashamed of behaving badly, as this not only reflects negatively on the community who are expected to have played a role in the individual’s upbringing, such that *hunhu* also leads to group criticism or the ostracising of the individual at fault (Nzenza, 2013; Sibanda, 2014; Mangena, 2012). This feedback mechanism is thought to result in the raising up of well-rounded, respectable and respected individuals as *hunhu* acts as a policing mechanism that limits individual opinions and actions to a common

moral position that has been determined – through dialogue – by a predominant number of elders who are considered “the custodians of moral, epistemological and ontological wisdom” (Mangena, 2012: 11). It is for this reason that Mangena argues for *hunhu* to be seen not only as a theoretical framework but as a dialogical moral theory, where the term dialogical is used to refer to a process of two-way communication through which varied individual options are pulled together to create common moral positions.

In his work, Mangena uses Swindler’s definition of dialogue to explain what exactly he means by a dialogical theory. Swindler defines dialogue as “two-way communication, where the persons involved in the dialogue do not have to hold the same views on a particular subject, but must have different points of view on issues of mutual concern” (cited in Mangena, 2012: 9). According to Mangena, a dialogical moral theory then acknowledges an individual not as an isolated body but as part of a larger community with “varying moral intuitions” with which s/he constantly interacts, thus making it impossible to “universalise his or her moral thoughts” (Osikhena cited in Mangena, 2012: 9). This implies that one person’s thoughts cannot be regarded as being reflective of everyone else’s thoughts; instead, the individual exists as a part of a wider community which influences or reshapes his/her thoughts based on the moral rules which have been created collectively. Each individual’s identity is highly dependent on his/her interaction with others and on the shared communal rationality and norms that were forged through mutual dialogue. Essentially then, one who is morally sensitive cannot be self-absorbed, as morally sensitive individuals are expected to respect others’ moral opinions (Osikhena cited in Mangena, 2012: 9).

This is particularly relevant in the case where the collective morality of a community or family is of utmost importance and not each individual’s morality. For example, when comments are made about an individual, s/he is not separated from the group s/he is from, as it takes the entire group’s effort to mould the individual. The Shona say “*mwana wekwaMadzivire haana hunhu*” which means “this child from the Madzivire family has no morals”, as the individual’s behaviour is thought to reflect the larger group. Such thinking emphasises the idea of family and community and is illustrated by the African expression “it takes a village to raise a child”. Mangena therefore sees *hunhu* not only as a dialogical moral theory, but as an African worldview and way of life. For Samkange and Samkange, in essence *hunhu* refers to “the

attention one human being gives to another: the kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in the relationship between people; a code of behaviour, an attitude to other people and to life” whose absence is easier to identify than its presence (1980: 39).

1.5.3 Family life course approach

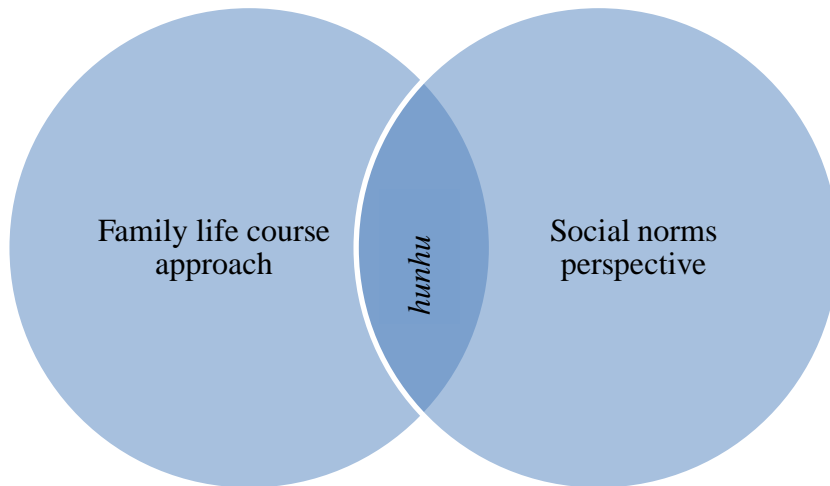
The family lifecourse approach is the main theory used in this study. A life course is defined as “a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time”, creating a sum total of an individual’s lived experiences (Elder & Giele 1998: 22). The life course approach creates an awareness of the linkages between families, individuals’ lives and the historical and socio-economic context they live in, thus providing the missing link in understandings of changes in family formation (Hareven, 1987; Gerson & Torres, 2015). The family unit can be viewed as a micro-social group housed in a macro social context –i.e. a “collection of individuals with shared history who interact within ever-changing social contexts across ever increasing time and space” (Bengston & Allen, 1993: 470; Hutchison, 2007). It is therefore expected that, for interpretations of family life to be accurate, they need to be built on a foundation of historical context and social change, which then shows how external conditions can facilitate or thwart individual choices such as the age at which one decides to marry (Hareven, 1978; Elder, 1978; Hutchinson, 2007; Gerson & Torres, 2015).

According to Hareven, understanding “the interaction between family development and historical change provides insight into the dynamics of social change, as well as a deeper understanding of the major transitions that have taken place in the history of the family” (1978: 1). Historical processes such as the interaction of cultural, economic, social and demographic factors are viewed as affecting individual or family transitions, which is discussed further in Chapter 2 of this thesis (Hutchison, 2007; Gerson & Torres, 2015). Looking from both a macro and a micro level, families are therefore viewed not as static units but as structures affected by changing historical conditions on the societal level and by the individual life course of its members on the micro level (Hareven, 1978). It is not only the forms of family that are changing but the meanings and functions as well, and this ultimately influences decisions around marriage and the expectations people have of marriage and family life (Pesando *et al*, 2018). These are all issues that form a key part of this research.

1.5.4 Concluding theoretical thoughts

Ultimately, while the family lifecourse approach stands as the central theory for this study, the three theoretical frameworks are closely related, with *hunhu* being an area of overlap between the social norms perspective and the life course approach. To explain this relationship, I use the figure (Figure 3) below.

Figure 3: Relationship between Social Norms, Hunhu and Life Course Perspectives



The source or basis of morality in traditional African society was the relationship with ancestors and ones' kinsmen. Moral and ethical codes were “derived from the ancestors and also from the ultimate interest and security of the blood group” (van der Walt, 2003: 57). *Hunhu* determined the formation of gender roles and social norms, dictating what it meant to be a man, a woman and a *munhu*, i.e. a real person in relation to others (Manyonganise, 2015). Traditional rules around morality did not leave room for people to question them, as emphasis was placed on conformity to the status quo and non-conformity was punished. Conformity was driven by fear, especially the fear of angering the ancestors and the fear of being ostracised by one's kin (van der Walt, 2003).

Moral and ethical codes were taught in the community with the family playing the main role as the socialising agent alongside the community. Family life was closely linked to spirituality and education as these were all facets in which the family played a role. Socialisation included teaching on the concept of *hunhu*, which was at the core of social norms (van der Walt, 2003). In fact, Kigongo (1991) put forward that, in traditional African societies, “ethical education was the

ultimate aim of education” (cited in van der Walt, 2003: 52). As traditional African beliefs and family structures began to disintegrate because of the effects of Christianity, colonialism, urbanisation and western values, the fear of ancestral spirits began to diminish and, alongside it, some of the core components of *hunhu*, such as tolerance, and a devotion to the family and the family’s welfare (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru & Makuvaza, 2014).

Given that the process of learning *hunhu* was and still is inextricably linked to family life, it should come as no surprise that changes in family values, beliefs and structures would also affect this spiritual consciousness and the way that it plays out in everyday life. The move from communalism to individualism along with the separation of many families from ancestral worship has led to changes in how children are raised. Some aspects of *hunhu* continue to be emphasised while others were lost and replaced by western ideals. A type of hybrid culture was therefore birthed, containing aspects of the old and the new (Chikovore, 2004). This undoubtedly influenced the type of *hunhu* that exists in modern day Zimbabwe. Thus *hunhu*, although no longer in its original form, is a matter which modern families continue to try and pass on to the younger generations. As such, young people’s behaviour too is to some extent controlled by the beliefs they hold around *hunhu*, as the younger generation also chooses what to accept and what to set aside. These beliefs affect the preferences and beliefs that young people have thus tying in with the social norms perspective.

In essence the transitions with regards to family structure, values and beliefs affect the role of the family as a socialisation agent, which affects what the younger generation learns about *hunhu* and the way this play out in their lives, ultimately determining how social norms are shaped or reshaped.

1.6 Thesis outline

Chapter 2 and 3 are the contextual chapters for the study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of marriage and child marriage. The social changes in the meanings attached to family and marriage are examined, along with how these changes led to the conceptualisation of the previously normal practice of child marriage as a human rights violation in the twentieth century. Child marriage is also explored in Africa in particular, looking at the drivers and consequences of child marriage.

Chapter 3 discusses Zimbabwean literature on marriage and child marriage. The various types of marriage historically amongst the Shona people are set out as well as the laws pertaining to marriage and child marriage. This chapter also presents the child marriage trends in Zimbabwe along with the drivers and consequences of child marriage. The chapter ends by reviewing the challenges faced in ending child marriage.

In light of these contextual chapters and the theoretical framing for the thesis as presented in Chapter 1, the next four chapters (Chapters 4 to 7) focus on the case study of child marriage in Mabvuku. Chapter 4 provides a short introduction to the study site and then narrates in some detail the experiences of child marriage from the perspective of the 25 women interviewed.

Chapter 5 then begins to reflect upon and analyse these experiences of child marriage based on the Mabvuku participants' own categorisation of their experiences as being negative, mixed or positive. This is followed by an identification and examination of key themes emerging from the narratives and an investigation into the lives of some of the women after their marriages ended. I also delve into the biological and social construction of 'childhood' and the implications of this for child marriage research.

Chapter 6 analyses the drivers of child marriage as identified amongst the women of Mabvuku, and in the context of certain aspects of the theoretical framing for the thesis (in particular, the social norms perspective). It also seeks to identify the types of marital unions entered into by child brides and how these unions relate to 'traditional' (pre-colonial) marriage practices amongst the Shona.

Chapter 7 examines child marriage amongst the Mabvuku women with reference to family transitions in post-colonial Zimbabwe. In doing so, and by drawing upon case study evidence from the previous three chapters, it denotes a tentative step in building theory about child marriage. In particular, the concept of *hunhu* is further explored alongside the impact of social changes in Shona family structure and functions. As well, the chapter considers the role of local authorities and NGOs in taking over some of the functions previously held by the family and the challenges faced in meeting child protection needs in contemporary Zimbabwe.

The concluding chapter (Chapter 8) offers a comprehensive overview of the arguments contained in the thesis by focusing on, in particular, the manner in which the objectives of the thesis were

addressed and the implications of the thesis for theorising about child marriage, at least with respect to Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF MARRIAGE AND CHILD MARRIAGE

2.1 Introduction

Marriage is a fluid and complex concept that is understood and manifested in different ways across cultures, religions and historical periods. Some of the common and broad ways in which marriage is conceptualised include as an institution, a rite/ritual or a process. As an institution, marriage is viewed as “a set of patterned, repeated, expected behaviours and relationships that are organised and endured over time”; as a rite, marriage includes a process of various rituals (such as a bridal shower) that culminate in a ceremony (such as a church wedding) “whereby the marriage status is achieved”; and, as a process, it is “a phenomenon marked by gradual changes that lead to ultimate dissolution through separation, divorce or death” (Ihinger-Tallman, 1992: 1181). Although presented separately in this manner to ensure clarity, these understandings of marriage are not mutually exclusive and can all exist simultaneously or can exist in various combinations over time. Taking all this into consideration, painting a picture of a “traditional marriage” in the universal sense is therefore an impossible task and this is one of the reasons why scholars within many disciplines, including those in the field of sociology, have been unable to agree on a universal definition for the term marriage. With this in mind, before delving into the issue of child marriage in Africa, this chapter explores marriage and the way that it has evolved throughout history on a global level. I focus only on presenting a broad historical view of marriage in major time periods as a deeper exploration of the cultural and religious differences that have moulded marriage in various eras across the globe overextends this study.

2.2 A universal view of marriage

Although marriage across the globe often has similar elements, there are also variations in important characteristics that result in it taking on different forms and functions within different social systems and historical periods (Mitchell, 1961). Whilst sociologists have often been unable to agree on a definition of marriage due to the complexities associated with it, anthropologists managed to come up with what they consider a universal, non-ethnocentric definition of the term. According to Haviland, Prins, McBride & Walrath (2014), marriage can be defined as “a culturally sanctioned union between two or more people that establishes certain

rights and obligations between the people, between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws” (2014: 202). Though this definition may appear to steer clear of ethnocentrism, I argue against the inclusion of the term “culturally sanctioned”, as history has shown that this is not an absolute position when it comes to marriage. This is an issue that is also apparent in the case of marriages within Zimbabwe as discussed in the following chapter. I cannot claim to have a universal definition of marriage that captures all diversity and will be used throughout this study, but here I modify the anthropological definition of marriage, merging it with the definition used by the World Fertility Survey to make it broader and therefore more inclusive (Udry, Dole & Gleiter, 1992). For the purposes of this study then, marriage is defined as a more or less stable union between two or more people, which is often sanctified by religion, law or custom and ‘establishes certain rights and obligations between the people, between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws’.

Given the challenges scholars face in defining marriage, it should come as no surprise that exploring the history of marriage is a taxing venture. Not only because of the various definitions of marriage but also because academics across various fields are unable to agree on whether or not marriage has existed for as long as humans have been around. It is often the case that the beliefs behind and about the existence of marriage align with one of the two schools of thought around the origins of the human race. Those who view the origins of mankind from a Christian perspective argue that in the past, marriage has always existed in one form or another in all human societies and this continues to be the case in present times, with the first mention of marriage being found in the Christian Bible (which speaks of the marital union between the first man and woman who ever lived, at around 4004BC) (Theroux, 2016). Those who lean towards the theory of evolution on the other hand date the origins of mankind to well before 4004BC. They often argue that, during the early stages of evolution, human pairing was seasonal, or that communities were loosely arranged in groups with several male leaders sharing multiple women solely for the sake of childbearing (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). Based on the latter belief system, marriage as a stable union in which rights and obligations are held between the parties becomes an arrangement that has not always existed. Rather, it is a product of the biological and social evolution of humans, with the first recorded evidence of a marriage between a man and woman only dating back to Mesopotamia (part of modern day western Asia) in 2350BC. As a Christian researcher, I fully believe in the first school of thought and therefore write with this in

mind. However, given the difficulty in finding sociological or other academic sources exploring marriage from the point of creation, my exploration of marriage in this thesis begins as per the evolutionary argument.

The following sections on the history of marriage speak to what appears to have been the general trend across various geographical eras within three different time periods in world history, namely, Ancient History, the Middle Ages and the Common Age. It is within the confines of this categorisation that the larger context of this study emerges.

2.2.1 Marriage in ancient history

The period that is considered ancient history spans from approximately 3500BC to 500AD and is said to be the period during which the earliest writing system and the recording of events by humans first began (Stearns, Adas, Schwartz & Gilbert, 2011). It is therefore plausible that, if we are not taking Biblical history into consideration, the first marriage ever recorded dates back to this time period. Historical studies on marriage which are generally secular in character therefore tend to use this time period as a departure point.

As no recordings of marriage exist before 2350BC, it is extremely difficult to trace back marriage beyond this time period. In fact, this difficulty is faced even after 2350BC as recorded information which explores marriage across different regions sometimes paints different pictures of marriage within the same region. As Matthews (2003) rightly puts it, “an examination of the laws and customs that deal with marriage and family in the ancient Near East is necessarily incomplete” (2003:1). This is because the conclusions of scholars are tentative and limited due to regional variations and the fragmented nature of the evidence about marriage and family available from these time periods. As the years pass and new discoveries are made, earlier understandings of marriage and family are therefore subject to change and contestation. For example, Bertman claims that “every marriage began with a legal contract. Indeed, as Mesopotamian law stated, if a man should marry without having first drawn up and executed a marriage contract, the woman he ‘marries’ would not be his wife” (2003: 276). Nemet-Nejat (1998) also emphasises the contract but, additionally, speaks of a wedding feast that had to be a part of the process as it formed part of the legal definition of a marriage. In a slightly different

understanding, McIntosh (2005) states that a marriage was based on a verbal agreement which started off the marriage process and which ended with a feast to formalise the marriage.

In the ancient world marriage was closely linked to politics, with it being used to form or strengthen alliances, acquire land and produce legitimate heirs (Coontz, 2005). Explorations of marriage in ancient history tend to focus on different parts of Africa and Eurasia. In exploring literature around these areas, it became apparent that marriages across these regions during ancient times had similar underlying patterns and levels of importance which makes it difficult to identify marriage practices linked exclusively to one population group. Treggiari gives us an insight into this by acknowledging for example that “[a]n exclusively ‘Roman’ regime of family and marriage is to some extent a theoretical construct” as it is difficult to extract specific Roman ideas and practices given that marriage was complex and multi-cultural (2003: 133).

According to Loven & Stromberg (2010), “marriage was one of the fundamental institutions of the ancient Greco-Roman world” and its importance is extensively reflected in “various types of ancient source material such as literary *topoi*, laws on marriage regulations, images and myths” (2010: 1). The legal right to marry was an indicator of social and judicial status and the purpose of marriage was the bearing of legitimate offspring. A wife was therefore judged by her ability to pro-create (Adkins & Adkins, 2004; Sack, Murray & Brody, 2014). The age of marriage varied from 12 to 16 years old for females and marriage marked the end of childhood, as it was viewed as a rite of passage to adulthood for both males and females alike (Loven & Stromberg, 2010). It was believed that 12 was the age at which girls became ready for sexual intercourse and those who married before this were only legally recognised as wives once they turned 12. Boys on the other hand usually were married in their late 20s even though they typically gained their independence from guardians at the age of 14, or after passing a physical inspection to confirm their maturity and ability to consummate a marriage (Treggiari, 2003). Marriages were noted as also geared towards building states and political alliances and “maintaining civic and social structures” which could explain why marriages were often arranged by the parents (Loven & Stromberg, 2010: 9). Even with parents being behind marriages, it was believed that “a marriage is made by consent” therefore the couple also needed to consent to the union (Treggiari, 2003: 153).

Marriage in the Near East was centred as well on creating advantageous family ties in terms of maintaining social and economic standing or ‘marrying up’, along with procreation and maintaining social order, with the most important role for a woman in marriage being to bear children. In this region as with others in ancient times, women married in their teenage years with the parents being responsible for selecting the husband as marriage was also linked to political or economic ambitions (Bertman, 2003; Matthews, 2003; McIntosh, 2005). Every marriage had to include a marriage contract between the families involved for the union to be formally recognised.

In this region, marriage was further understood as a process including the engagement, payment of dowry and bride price, a wedding feast or ceremony, the bride’s move to her in-laws and sexual intercourse. Where the bride was still too young at the time of the marriage, the consummation of the marriage occurred later and sometimes she remained in the care of her father until she was said to have reached a good age. The marriage itself only became recognised legally as such after the dowry and the bride price had been paid in full, which could happen in a series of instalments where the balance had to be paid by the time the couple had their first child (Nemet-Nejat, 1998). The marriage contract often included the notion of widow inheritance where the bride would be expected to remarry one of her late husband’s brothers or male relatives thus keeping the families’ ties intact even after her husband passed away. This further shows how marriage occurred between families and not between individuals (Nemet-Nejat, 1998).

Amongst the Egyptians, marriages were likewise contracted for political reasons and for procreation (Bunson, 2002). Marriage was viewed as synonymous with setting up a home. There was no marriage ceremony linked to the taking of a wife but it was expected that pre-nuptial agreements would be drawn up and that gifts would be exchanged between the families. Once the marriage agreement was signed, the couple was formally recognised as married. It was possible for marriages to be contracted from the ages of 12 and 15 for girls and boys, respectively, but more often than not the average ages for marriage were 14 and 18, respectively. At this point, it was expected for girls to have been thoroughly trained to take up the post of home-making and taking care of a family whilst the boy would have learnt a trade from his father thus allowing him to provide for his family (Allen, 2009; Dell, 2013).

2.2.2 Marriage in the middle ages

The period referred to as the middle ages or medieval age spans from 500AD to 1500AD. The literature on marriage across Asia and Egypt explores marriage across ancient times and the middle ages simultaneously, which could either be an indication that marriage in these regions was similar across these time frames or that there is a dearth of data on the differences that could have existed. However, the history of marriage in Europe includes a separate analysis of marriage in the middle ages. This analysis is embedded within historical studies of the social changes during this period and the effects they had on the structure of the family and the ways in which marriages were contracted.

In middle age Europe, the fall of the Roman Empire and the imperial law around the fifth century resulted in the rise of the church. The church redefined marriage from being a private contract between families to a personal affair involving two consenting individuals (Accilien, 2008). The importance of creating family ties and the contracting of marriages for socio-political reasons, although still relevant especially amongst the upper classes, therefore took a back seat with the individual's consent being a pre-requisite for a valid marriage. This gave young people some freedom regarding the choice of their marriage partner. However, as with the ancient times, childhood ended early for children in the middle ages with the upper classes marrying off girls from the age of 12. As Syrett (2016) notes, this age was based on the English common law which stated that girls and boys could marry from the age of 12 and 14, respectively. This law was instated with the intention to account for the onset of puberty therefore ensuring sex occurred within marriage. The law also allowed for children as young as seven to enter into what can be viewed as a sort of 'starter marriage' which remained unconsummated and lasted until the children were old enough to either transition into a 'real', consummated marriage or to change their minds about the marriage (Syrett, 2016).

While children in the upper class had parents who often arranged marriages for their children, it is possible that children from lower classes had somewhat more of a choice around their marriage partners. But in both cases marriages remained economic and political transactions used to make some sort of gain. For example, in Europe "the dowry a wife brought with her at marriage was often the biggest infusion of cash, goods, or land a man would ever acquire" (Coontz, 2005:6). Commoners who made these transactions on a smaller scale were sometimes

concerned about things such as whether one's potential in-laws would be useful or marrying someone with nearby fields.

2.2.3 Marriage in the common age/modern history

The common age spans from 1500AD to current times. Although the changes to marriage moved slowly and unevenly in the West, it is during this time frame (in the late eighteenth century in particular) that we see a significant move away from marriage influenced or even forced by parents based on political and economic motivations, to marriage based mainly on love and the consent between the two concerned parties. As perceptions around marriage and its functions began to change, the emphasis on a complementary union between two compatible and 'equal' people who loved each other increased. This change had an impact not only on the age of marriage as "in this context a loving, fulfilling marriage between a child and adult seemed strange at best, abusive at worst", but also on international laws governing marriage (Silva-de-Alwis, 2008; Little, 2018: par.8). The West then can be viewed as one of the key driving forces behind the way that childhood and marriage are viewed as far as international laws are now concerned.

In the 1870s and 1880s, United States newspapers began publishing stories about weddings between youthful brides and older men. The term 'child bride' then came into regular use, with newspaper articles focusing not on the wedding itself but on the bride's youth and childishness. Alongside this was the new idea that childhood was a separate stage of life and that children (whether they thought they were ready or not) were not fit for marriage because of their immaturity. The argument for raising the legal age for marriage led to some changes in marriage laws across the United States as it aligned with a series of other forces such as a women's movement, purity campaigns to raise the age of consent for sex, and an anti-divorce reformers' campaign to lower divorce rates by ensuring the wrong people do not marry each other (Syrett, 2016; Little, 2018). The most powerful of these forces was most likely the anti-divorce campaign as the reformers based their arguments on the high divorce rates amongst young people, be it those married to an age-mate or those married to an older spouse.

While others held on to the idea that there was nothing wrong with the marriage of children (as the common law still stipulated 12 and 14 years as the legal limit for girls and boys to wed), this

reform movement fuelled the idea that adults and children were fundamentally different. In this sense, childhood was a distinct life stage and “marriage was an adult institution that needed protecting from those who might not take it seriously, children among them” (Syrett, 2016: 122; James and Prout, 1990). One Yale professor was quoted as saying that “the most prolific cause of the disease [divorce] proves to be the unfitness of young married people for the discharge of their marital obligations” (Robinson, 1881 cited in Syrett, 2016). As the idea of teenagers not being ready for marriage (even if they thought they were) was fairly new, the friction between this belief system and the old one contributed to the problematisation of childhood, which is explored below.

Ultimately, the work carried out by the anti-divorce reformers had consequences on limitations around children’s rights to marry and “by the later 1800s and the first few decades of the twentieth century lawmakers had raised the marriageable age in more than half the states” (Syrett, 2016: 122).

2.3 Conceptualising Childhood

The question as to what or who is a child is not just about semantics; rather, it is a question that is central to academic and professional practice. Before developmental psychologists began emphasising the development of children and the distinct life stages associated with various levels of mental and social development, people (particularly in the west) did not place much emphasis on chronological age. In fact, many people before the late nineteenth and maybe even in the early twentieth century did not know their exact age, therefore blurring the ending of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. The understanding of childhood was more functional than it was chronological, with the belief that certain situations such as marriage could transform a child into a legal and social adult (James & Prout, 1990; Coontz, 2005; Syrett, 2016).

In earlier times, it was difficult to keep children out of the lives of adults as there was no privacy at home and the formal education system in the form of the school did not exist to shape childhood. Children learnt within their homes and prepared for the responsibilities of adulthood through apprenticeship which began around the age of seven, as this was viewed as the age of reason. Given the fact that no formal schooling system existed and there was significant work to do at home and not enough people to do it, it is plausible that children got involved in work tasks

as soon as they were strong enough to help, taking on the role of miniature adults (Holt, 2013). By the time a girl in medieval Europe reached the age of nine or ten, she behaved like a ‘little lady’ and performed duties which were no different to those performed by adult women; after all, she was being trained in running a household and looking after a family (Firestone, 2003). It therefore was no surprise that when she began puberty, usually around the age of 12, she could be married off (Firestone, 2003). Boys though needed more time to learn the skills that they could use in providing for their families. Their expected age of first marriage was therefore somewhat higher but they too began learning to take on an adult role from a young age.

The role of children and the way they were viewed began to change in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. While children were ordinarily in adult spaces from as young as seven, they began to be moved out of adult spaces during this period due to a number of changes that occurred simultaneously. The average life span was increasing, as was the amount of time adults spent outside the home. Furthermore, the level of skill needed for most work outside the home was increasing, so that the formal education system moved in and took over a significant portion of the rearing and educating of children. Long periods in school became necessary before adult responsibilities could be assumed and childhood took on a new meaning. The field of psychology and medicine also played a role in shaping this emerging view of childhood. It is during this time that childhood as we know it today became an institutionalised separate phase of life (Pollock, 1983; Aries, 1996; Syrett, 2016).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, children’s toys began as well to emerge along with children’s clothing. For example, while children used to switch immediately to smaller versions of adult clothes once they reached the age of reasoning, children’s clothes became more and more differentiated from those of adults, further showing the separation between the two groups and the reformulation of childhood. People also began to worry about children’s purity and protecting their innocence (Firestone, 2003). Thus, not only was childhood recognised as a separate phase of life, it was also viewed as one which needed protecting. Childhood officially became a necessary “kind of walled garden in which children, being small and weak are protected from the harshness of the world outside until they become strong and clever enough to cope with it” (Holt, 2013: 22). This was done by leaning heavily on chronological age and using the age of 18 to distinguish between those who were in a state of dependency and unable to make

rational decisions and those who had attained adulthood and therefore had reached the peak of rationality. This of course was an arbitrary number and the idea of viewing someone as an adult as soon as he or she turns 18 has been contested in many fields (Holt, 2013; Giaquinta, 2016). This is discussed further during the analysis of the experiences of child brides in Mabvuku (Chapter 5).

The recognition of childhood as a distinct phase peaked in the twentieth century which was dubbed ‘the century of the child’ (James & Prout, 1990). Children and children’s issues became highly profiled as part of the new child-centred society where children and children’s interests were given a “prominent place in the policy and practices of legal, welfare, medical and educational institutions” (James & Prout, 1990: 1). In 1924 the League of Nations had acknowledged the importance of children’s rights and the need for their protection by adopting the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which was the first ever document that recognised and affirmed rights which are specific to children. After the United Nations was founded and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) drawn up, it became apparent that gaps were present in the way in which the rights accorded to children were being addressed. In 1959, instead of drafting a new document to use, the United Nations adopted an extended form of the Geneva Declaration, thereby bringing children to the agenda in a more meaningful way. Twenty years after the adoption of the new declaration, “this Magna Carta for children’s rights was still in abeyance, if not entirely violated”, which resulted in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) proclaiming 1979 the International Year of the Child (UNESCO, 2009: par.1). This move was intended to promote awareness of children’s issues and the need for states to protect and assure children’s rights as set out in the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child followed in 1989.

Given that the United Nations is a global human rights system, this Western conceptualisation of childhood was exported to Third World countries or developing nations more broadly. However, as time went by, it became evident that while childhood as a condition of biological immaturity is a universal human feature, childhood as an institution is socially constructed with different societies conceiving and articulating children’s immaturity in different ways, based on factors such as cultural attitudes and practices. Furthermore, even within the various cultural

constructions of childhood, different individuals have different experiences (James & Prout, 1990). This made the Western view of childhood, with its white middle class values, incompatible with other realms of social and cultural life and led to the demonisation of corresponding forms of childhood, including those experienced in working class life in which children are required to work as a part of their everyday activities (Boyden, 1990). Taking all people below the age of 18 as children who need protecting has therefore been problematised in many contexts, including those in which child marriage occurs (Giaquinta, 2016; Stark, 2018). These tensions are discussed further as the experiences of child marriage in Mabvuku are explored through the eyes of my research participants.

2.4 Marriage and the global human rights framework

The nineteenth century's crystallisation of childhood as a distinct stage and the period of marriage law reform in the United States expanded to other regions and, by the twentieth century, marriage practices were becoming scrutinised on a global level. This led to the creation of global and international instruments to govern marriage (James & Prout, 1990; Syrett, 2016). For example, the 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (Slavery Convention) had a clause which governed marriage (Silva-de-Alwis, 2008). The convention equated forced marriage (which had been a common occurrence in the past) to slavery and required all states to abolish or abandon any institutions or practices whereby forced or child marriage could occur as shown below. Thus the Slavery Convention articulated the following in Article 1:

“Each of the States Parties to this Convention shall take all practicable and necessary legislative and other measures to bring about progressively and as soon as possible the complete abolition or abandonment of...

(c) Any institution or practice whereby:

(i) A woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family or any other person or group; or

(ii) *The husband of a woman, his family, or his clan, has the right to transfer her to another person for value received or otherwise; or*

(iii) *A woman on the death of her husband is liable to be inherited by another person;*

(d) *Any institution or practice whereby a child or young person under the age of 18 years, is delivered by either or both of his natural parents or by his guardian to another person, whether for reward or not, with a view to the exploitation of the child or young person or of his labour.*” (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1956).

Article 2 went on to state that:

“...the States Parties undertake to prescribe, where appropriate, suitable minimum ages of marriage, to encourage the use of facilities whereby the consent of both parties to a marriage may be freely expressed in the presence of a competent civil or religious authority, and to encourage the registration of marriages.”(United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1956).

By considering the consequences of child marriage in the modern age, it was also established that child marriage violates rights guaranteed in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the 1964 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the 1964 Convention on the Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Silva-de-Alwis,2008; African Child Policy Forum, 2013).

As evidenced in this section, the existence of child marriage (or at least the existence of marriage between those under the age of 18) is not a new phenomenon, but is simply one that has gained more attention over the years due to the changing perceptions of childhood and marriage. It is my belief that, in examining the international frameworks that govern marriage, the formal

recognition of childhood as a distinct life-stage which is incompatible with marriage peaked in September 2013 when the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) officially added child marriage to the list of globally recognised human rights violations. This was after 107 countries affirmed the choice to marry as strictly an adult decision which should be made freely in the absence of fear, coercion or pressure (Robels, 2013). The council also adopted the first UN resolution on child, early and forced marriage. While forced marriage may be easier to define, ‘child’ and ‘early’ marriage are phenomena that are often problematised not only because of the fluidity of marriage but also because of the recent – and increasing – acknowledgement of childhood as being socially constructed. However, in keeping in line with the legal definitions that make it possible for states to act around the stipulation and enforcement of laws, including those on marriage, this thesis builds on the previously-outlined definition of marriage and thus presents child marriage as a more or less stable union which is often sanctified by religion, law or custom – in doing so, this establishes certain rights or obligations between two or more people where at least one of the parties is below the age of 18, between them and their children and between them and their in-laws.

2.5 Child marriage in Africa

Of the 650 million women and girls alive today who were married before the age of 18, 125 million live in Africa (UNICEF, 2018b). Each year an additional 12 million children are married, with some of the highest rates of child marriage being reported in sub-Saharan Africa where 38% marry before their 18th birthday (UNICEF, 2017). Although the rate of child marriage across the region has been declining, this decline needs to be accelerated for significant change to be seen as, at the current rate, it will take at least another 100 years to eliminate child marriage in Africa (UNICEF, 2018b). In fact, given the rapid population growth in Africa, if the decline in the prevalence rate does not accelerate significantly, it may be offset by the population growth, leading to an increase in the number of child brides in Africa (UNICEF, 2018). As the burden of child marriage shifts towards Africa, it is possible that Africa will surpass Asia as the region with the highest number of child marriages in the world². As it stands, of the girls who were recently

²UNICEF (2016). While countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage are concentrated in western and sub-Saharan Africa, due to population size, the largest number of child brides reside in South Asia.

married before their 18th birthday, 1 in 3 are found in sub-Saharan Africa as compared to the ratio of 1 in 7 which existed 25 years ago (UNICEF, 2018c). It is with this in mind that the African human rights system continues to intensify efforts to combat child marriage within the region. This section gives an overview of this human rights system before delving into the drivers and consequences of child marriage, along with the challenges in addressing child marriage in Africa at large.

2.5.1 Child marriage and the African human rights system

The African human rights system is one of the three most established regional human rights systems globally. Much like other regional human rights systems, the African system was birthed as a result of inspiration drawn from the earlier-mentioned global instruments which were set up as steps along the road to making important developments towards human rights protection. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)–South East Asia Regional Office in Bangkok (ROB), the creation of the regional bodies was a way to assist the promotion and protection of human rights by localising “international human rights norms and standards, reflecting the particular human rights concerns of the region” (OHCHR-ROB, 2009: par. 1). The systems include various instruments such as treaties, conventions, declarations and commitments; as well as mechanisms such as commissions, rapporteurs and courts which acknowledge the specific challenges that may be faced by one region and not another, and the different ways in which various problems affect different regions. These systems therefore address regional challenges in a context specific manner. For example, the issue of child marriage has been highlighted by the African human rights system and it is addressed by various treaties and special mechanisms such as the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women (OHCHR-ROB, 2009). In essence then, effective human rights systems use various instruments and mechanisms to:

- assist national governments to implement international human rights obligations;
- provide “people with more accessible mechanisms for the protection of their human rights, once national remedies have been exhausted”;
- raise “peoples’ awareness of their human rights, placing them in a more localised context and reflecting their particular human rights concerns”;

- provide “regional input to the development of international human rights standards and the improvement of international human rights mechanisms”; and
- help “national governments to better address regional human rights concerns that cross national borders” (OHCHR-ROB, 2009).

The Africa human rights system is located within the African Union (AU) which is a political arrangement which was founded originally in 1963 under the name, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The African Union functions in accordance with principles of sovereignty and “non-interference by any Member State in the internal affairs of another” (AU, 2000: 7). But, this sovereignty is not boundless or uncontrolled as sanctions can be imposed on “any Member State that fails to comply with the decisions and policies of the Union” (AU, 2000: 15) including decisions and policies about the respect for human rights, the promotion of gender equality and accepting the AU’s right to “intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstance” (AU, 2000: 7). Therefore, this sovereignty is “circumscribed and limited by the other principles of the AU” (Viljoen cited in OHCHR-ROB, 2009a: 18). In his presentation at a workshop hosted by the OHCHR-ROB, Viljoen further addressed this issue of sovereignty stating that “for the most serious manifestations of human rights violations, there is a very explicit right of collective intervention in the name of all the members together in the domestic affairs or domestic arena of African states, again reinforcing the acceptance of sovereignty but its erosion at the same time” (cited in OHCHR-ROB, 2009a:18).

The prescriptive part of the African human rights system is predominantly derived from the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. This charter has “been supplemented by further normative texts that have been adopted” and these include three of the texts which address issues of child marriage, namely, the 2003 Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child (which is a treaty dealing specifically with children’s rights) and the 2006 African Youth Charter (Viljoen cited in OHCHR-ROB, 2009a:19). These three instruments address child marriage specifically within Africa, alongside the 2008 Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development and the recent (2016) Model Law on ending child marriage.

Each of these instruments has provisions that prohibit child marriage as shown below (the Model Law is discussed at a later point):

- **The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)**

Article 21 (2): “Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory.”

- **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) (Maputo Protocol)**

Article 6 (a): “State Parties shall ensure that women and men enjoy equal rights and are regarded as equal partners in marriage. They shall enact appropriate national legislative measures to guarantee that no marriage shall take place without the free and full consent of both parties.” - Article 6 (b): “The minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years.”

- **The African Youth Charter (2006)**

Article 8 (2): “Young men and women of full age who enter into marriage shall do so based on their free consent and shall enjoy equal rights and responsibilities.”

- **SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008)**

Article 8 (2): “Legislation on marriage shall ensure: (a) That no person under the age of 18 shall marry, unless otherwise specified by law which takes into account the best interests and welfare of the child. (b) Every marriage takes place with the free and full consent of both parties.”

Various initiatives and commitments are based on these instruments and the desire to effectively address child marriage, and these include:

- **The Africa we want Agenda 2063 (2013)**

Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework/action plan drawn up by the African Union “for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years” (AU, 2017: par. 1). This action plan recognises the role of child marriage in negatively affecting the continent’s socio-economic development and prosperity. Under Aspiration 6, paragraph 51, the plan includes provisions for putting an end to harmful social practices including child marriage and eliminating barriers to quality health and education for women and girls – of which child marriage is one such barrier (African Union, 2015b). Under

Paragraph 72k, member states commit to “mobilise a concerted drive towards immediately ending child marriages, female genital mutilation and other harmful cultural practises that discriminate against women” (African Union, 2015b: 17).

- **Addis Ababa Declaration on Child Marriage (2014)**

This declaration was led by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and was issued after the ACERWC, representatives of UN agencies and various international organisations, and child rights experts from across Africa completed a day long discussion on ending child marriage in April 2014. Through the declaration, member states are urged “to combat child marriage through setting the minimum age for marriage at 18 years for both girls and boys without exception, including establishing an effective mechanism for registration of birth, marriage and termination of marriage”, and to “put in place mechanisms to operationalise existing legislation relating to child marriage and the rights of children in general including development of national action plans and provision of legal aid for enforcement of the rights of children to be free from child marriage.” (ACERWC, 2014: 3-4).

- **African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa (2014-2016)**

The campaign focused on “accelerating change across the continent by encouraging African governments to develop strategies to raise awareness of and address the harmful impact of child marriage as well as expediting and invigorating the movement to end child marriage by: (i) supporting policy action in the protection and promotion of human rights, especially with a view to addressing violence against girls and women and promoting gender equitable social norms; (ii) mobilising continental awareness of and engagement to end child marriage and; (iii) removing barriers and bottlenecks to law enforcement.” (AU, 2015a: par 1.).

Although many countries in Africa, including Zimbabwe, have ratified all the instruments stated above and are part of the commitments made and the initiatives being rolled out, addressing child marriage continues to be an uphill battle and “the overall prevalence of child marriage in Africa is higher than the global average” (Centre for Human Rights & African Commission Special Rapporteur on Rights of Women, 2018: 19). In Africa, the weak implementation of laws passed and commitments made is one of the reasons why child marriage continues to exist. Other drivers of child marriage include poverty, the lack of education, and the inadequacy of birth and

marriage registration protocols, to name a few. Due to these multiple and often intertwined drivers, law-related strategies alone are inadequate to address child marriage, but certainly legal guidelines help to raise awareness and create clear benchmarks, standards and remedies to address child marriage (Silva-de-Alwis, 2008).

In a bid to address “the most common problem of inconsistencies and gaps in the laws which weaken the sanction mechanisms available to law enforcement agencies across the region”, a new instrument to combat child marriage – the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage – was drawn up (Angerer cited in Girls Not Brides, 2016a). The final version of the Model Law which was adopted by the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) in June 2016 addresses and eliminates “several loop holes that make current laws ineffective and unenforceable” including parental and judicial consent whereby parents or court officials can give consent for children below the stipulated age (i.e. below 18) to get married, the lack of effective birth and marriage registration systems, and conflicts between religious, customary and statutory laws regarding the minimum age of marriage (Girls Not Brides, 2016a: par. 4). The Model Law also calls for increased public awareness regarding the laws surrounding child marriage and provides “training of child marriage prohibition officers, judicial officers, law enforcement officers, traditional leaders, religious authorities, other public officers and policy makers, at all levels of the State” so that laws can be “understood, implemented and enforced” (Girls Not Brides, 2016a; SADC-PF, 2016: 64). The Model Law can be used as a point of reference by southern African states which are in the process of looking to begin drafting and shaping “their own legislation and policies in a manner adequate to address child marriage” (Mandlate, 2016: 1). The Model Law is made up of the parts presented below:

Preamble

“The preamble outlines the underlining human rights basis of the law and the commitments that Member States of SADC have already made at regional, continental and international levels on child rights and eradication of child marriage” (SADC-PF, 2016: x).

Part I: Preliminary Provisions

This section presents “the preliminary aspects of the Model Law, such as the objectives, domestication and interpretation provisions” (SADC-PF, 2016: x).

Part II: Restatement of Rights and Concepts Relating to the Child, Policy Initiatives, Measures and Interventions

This section holds “the basis of the law for eradicating child marriage and protecting children who are already in marriage”, and also deals with children’s sexual reproductive rights “and the issues surrounding sexuality and comprehensive sexuality education as part of the provision on the right to health” (SADC-PF : xii).

Part III: Prohibition of Child Betrothal and Marriage

This section is considered the core to any and all laws on the eradication of child marriage. The provisions found here impact on other existing laws found on Member States Statute Books. This includes laws on marriage, gender based violence, trafficking and adoption for example.

Part IV: Measures and Standards to Prevent Child Marriage

This section “provides for measures and interventions to try and prevent child marriage and delay marriage” (SADC-PF, 2016: xiii). The provisions set here help to eradicate child marriage in the long run.

Part V: Measures and Interventions to Mitigate the Effects of Child Marriage

This section which looks at the mitigation of child marriage also includes a bit of information on measures which can be used for child care and protection by the state.

Part VI: Access to Data and Information, Public Awareness Monitoring and Evaluation

This section “provides for detailed measures and interventions to enable effective access to information and data on child marriage, children already in marriage, victims of child marriages and children in need of care and protection”(SADC-PF, 2016: xv). Emphasis is also placed on the effective monitoring and evaluation of measures and interventions. This is all done in acknowledgement of the fact that individual “member states will only be able to understand and deal with the problem comprehensively if they have a clear picture of the problems on the ground” (Mandlate, 2016: 1).

Part VII: General Provisions, Offences and Enforcement

This section lays out “enforcement and compliance provisions for the successful implementation of a law on eradicating child marriage” (SADC-PF, 2016: xv). This includes “a proposition of punishment for perpetrators” and a “monitoring mechanism under the SADC.” (Mandlate, 2016: 1).

To help ensure that this Model Law is accepted across the region, various stakeholders and experts including law makers, civil society organisations, lawyers, academics and representatives of United Nations agencies were involved in the finalisation of the Model Law. They made comments and provided suggestions which were used to rework the draft Model Law thus developing a final Model Law that “best serves its intended beneficiaries who include women and girls who continue to be worst affected by child marriage” (Chiviya, 2015: 1). The potential effect of this Model Law was visible even before it was finalised as its development process “emboldened some SADC Member States to examine the causes, extent and impacts of child marriage in their countries with a view to taking concrete steps” (Chiviya, 2015: 1). Sadly, as of August 2018, the law still had not been implemented by member states due to a lack of political will (*Newsday*, 2018, August 3). Given that the Model Law is not an actual law but is a sample or template that provides an “easy to apply regional standard” in terms of the legal response to child marriage by SADC countries, implementation then comes by way of countries making use of the Model Law as “a set of legal standards which are offered for the consideration of, and adoption [fully or in part] by, national legislators as part of their national law” (SADC-PF, *Girls Not Brides & UNFPA*, 2018: 3, 7).

Although this Model Law may be a great tool for addressing child marriage and protecting the girl child, legislative reform alone is not enough to tackle child marriage. One of the experts who contributed to the Model Law, Mrs Ronaldah Lerato Karabo Ozah, commented that “the law on its own will not eradicate child marriage but will remind us all of our obligations to protect girl children and this is the responsibility of all – communities, lawyers as well religious and traditional leaders” (cited in *The Sentinel*, 2015: 4). This statement highlights the need for a holistic and comprehensive approach to fight against child marriage, involving all members of a society as child marriage has many drivers that affect lay people’s willingness to accept laws against child marriage and the enforcement of these laws.

2.5.2 Drivers of child marriage in Africa

Various drivers of child marriage exist across the globe and these have been documented extensively. As Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindemans state, “child marriage does not lack explanations. If anything, child marriage has too many” (2014: 5). However, despite this, there are common causes of child marriage across different regions. While keeping in mind the diversity of African cultures, ethnicities, racial groups, and political and economic environments, common factors can be pinpointed. The common drivers of child marriage identified within the African context include: poverty; limited or a lack of access to education; the fear for a daughter’s safety; cultural/traditional and religious beliefs and the stigma associated with straying away from them; unaligned legal frameworks; inadequate birth and marriage registration procedures; armed conflict and sexual violence; and an overall underlying situation of gender inequality whereby girls have a low value placed on them (Girls Not Brides, 2017; Centre for Human Rights & African Commission Special Rapporteur on Rights of Women, 2018).

Although these factors are often presented separately in different pieces of literature, the literature also shows that there are no clear cut boundaries where the drivers of child marriage are concerned. In fact, child marriage is the result of “an interplay of social norms, economics, structures and familial motivations” (Hodgkinson, 2016: 18). Though pinpointing the most significant driver of child marriage is considered impossible by some, most scholars highlight that child marriage is rooted in gender inequality and the undervaluing of girls along with gender norms that dictate the ‘acceptable’ behaviour for girls, with a smaller number suggesting that economic insecurity is in fact the key driver of child marriage (Hodgkinson, 2016; SADC-PF, Girls Not Brides & UNFPA, 2018). Countering the argument put forward by the latter group, Hodgkinson states that “there is clearly an interplay between these two factors as even if economic reasons are the primary cause of child marriage, gendered norms still dictate that it is normally girls who are married as children and not their male counterparts” (2016: 18).

If one is to look closely, all the drivers of child marriage are related in one way or another, with many of them being inextricably linked, playing at times the role of both causes and consequences. For example, while poverty or the lack of or limited education can lead one into child marriage, entering into a marriage at a young age can also lead to limited education. This is because one is forced to drop out of school, resulting in limited economic opportunities, which

potentially leads to poverty (Centre for Human Rights & the African Commission Special Rapporteur on Rights of Women, 2018). The following section explores these drivers, citing relevant research that has been carried out within Africa.

2.5.2.1 Gender inequality

According to the Centre for Human Rights (CHR) and the African Commission Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women (ACSRRW), because child marriage is predominantly based on young girls marrying men who are significantly older, “none of the other social, cultural and economic factors can be understood without reference to the inferior status accorded to girls and women” in most societies across the region (2018: 25). Although it is not possible to speak of an (or one common) African culture because of the cultural diversity across the continent and the differences in cultural beliefs and practices even within sub-national spaces, many groups share similarities when it comes to the differentiated structure of family relations and gender roles (CHR&ACSRRW, 2018). These are often rooted in traditional and religious beliefs and practices along with informal and formal laws and customs dating back to the colonial era and indeed earlier. These factors work together to dictate women and girls’ social and economic roles, often placing and leaving women and girls in a disadvantaged position by perpetuating a system of underinvestment in girls’ development and futures as boys are ascribed a higher value (Hodgkinson, 2016).

In a number of cases, girls are considered ready for marriage once they reach puberty. This way of thinking links to gender norms as a girl’s role in a marriage is confined to bearing children and performing household chores, which requires no formal education. The girl child is socialised into these roles from a young age and her ability to perform them is not particularly linked to an adult status or her level of intelligence. Instead of focusing on her age, a girl can therefore be viewed as ready for marriage as soon as she can perform the above-mentioned duties, which is often by puberty given that ‘training’ starts early. Male counterparts, on the other hand, are said to be ready for marriage when it is clear they can lead and provide for a household. This results in males being expected to be older and more established when they enter into marriage as it is only much later in life that a person would have acquired the “cultural, social, economic and educational achievements” necessary to be a provider (Hodgkinson, 2016: 19). Hence, girls are considered ‘ready’ for marriage considerably earlier than boys, and with significantly less

resources having been put into their development, which echoes with gender roles and understandings of marriage from medieval ages. Ultimately, the male's role within the family then acts to elevate him to a dominant position as the head of the household as he has financial control and can control his wife's movements and activities, as she is likely to be financially dependent upon him.

2.5.2.2 Traditional, cultural and religious beliefs

Beliefs about sexuality, gender roles and women's subordination are often embedded within many customary practices, tradition, culture and religion, therefore putting women and the girl child at a disadvantage just by their mere existence. These beliefs not only increase vulnerability towards child marriage as, in some cases, they may also play an active role in promoting it (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018). For example, viewing girls simply as homemakers whose lives do not really need to be invested in through education increases their vulnerability as they have limited economic opportunities to better their lives, as discussed below. While this increases the prospect of entering into a child marriage, promotion of child marriage also takes place – this could be in the form of religious or traditional leaders actively encouraging child marriage based on the religious or traditional beliefs which they hold, as also discussed below.

The customary practice of paying a bride price or dowry is an example of a practice that increases vulnerability to child marriage, particularly amongst the poor where economic resources and opportunities are limited not only for parents but for their children as well. In such cases, “poverty creates powerful and rational incentives for child marriage” as it leads directly to some form of income and also leaves the family with less children to provide for (Hodgkinson, 2016: 20; Smaak & Varia, 2015).

Traditional/cultural beliefs around women's roles in society often link up with religious beliefs, promoting child marriage by creating a toxic environment in which young girls are pushed into marriage early as a means of controlling their sexuality (Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindemans, 2014). In some communities, child marriage is practiced because of church doctrines or cultural beliefs that it helps avoid pre-marital sex. Certain religious texts, particularly amongst some Islamic populations, are said to permit and in some cases even encourage child marriage. For this reason, African countries with large Islamic populations tend to have higher prevalence rates of child

marriage (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018). Gambia for example, with its 95% Muslim population, is a society in which for the most part, child marriage is not viewed as wrong or against the child's best interests. In fact, it's been said that some community members believe that child marriage prepares girls for life, and child marriage itself is "a positive part of life and tradition... These same community members also tend to prescribe particular roles for women and girls, with an emphasis on childbearing and housekeeping."(CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 27). In such a case, child marriage is actively promoted.

Culturally, child marriage can also be promoted as an acceptable means of controlling a girl's sexuality, particularly in areas where a girl's virginity before marriage is highly valued. In some cases, the bride's mother receives a gift from the groom's family if the bride was a virgin on their wedding night. If a gift is not received, this brings dishonour to her family as the lack of the bride's virginity is considered an indicator of the mother's poor parenting skills. One of the places where this practice occurs is the Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018). In such cases, the earlier a girl is married the higher the chances of her being a virgin and a gift being received, therefore maintaining the honour of the family. This emphasis on virginity and the control of girls' sexuality goes as far as forcing or pressuring girls into marriage should they fall pregnant out of wedlock, as this situation would lead to her being ostracised by her family and possibly the community as well. This is sometimes true even in cases where the pregnancy is a direct result of rape (Hodgkinson, 2016; CHR & ACSRRW, 2018). To avoid waiting until a girl has fallen pregnant out of wedlock, in many traditional societies the onset of puberty is used as an indicator of a girl's readiness to become a wife as she can now bear children and is therefore ultimately considered a woman. This also brings to mind the way in which girls' sexuality was also policed in the medieval ages (Smaak & Varia, 2015; CHR & ACSRRW, 2018; UNICEF, 2001).

Lastly, in some areas, marriage is a rite of passage that every girl is meant to take part in to "fulfil her role in life. Equally, women and girls are sometimes viewed as property and may be used to consolidate family ties or settle feuds" (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 27).

2.5.2.3 Poverty

Research has shown that child marriage is more prevalent in developing countries, particularly in the poorer sections of these nations. According to *Girls Not Brides* (2017, par. 1), “girls from poor families are more than three times more likely to marry before 18 as girls from wealthier families” and “more than 50% of girls from the poorest families in the developing world, married as children”. A report published by UNICEF also shows a correlation between income levels and child marriage as it showed that “females in the poorest quintile are 2.5 times more likely to marry in childhood than those living in the wealthiest quintile”; furthermore, “across all regions, girls who live in rural areas are more likely to become child brides than their urban counterparts” (2014: 3).

Within the overarching theme of poverty, there a number of reasons why the decision to marry off a girl can be made: some of these are self-serving while others are centred on the well-being of the girl herself. In some cases, where a bride price is paid, poor families view child marriage positively as an “economic survival strategy” as it alleviates their economic burden on two fronts, namely, by providing a source of income and by ensuring that the family has one less child to provide for (Smaak & Varia, 2015: 4; Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindemans, 2014). The perception of girls being economic burdens “that can be relieved through marriage” is often fuelled by “discriminatory gender norms... including traditions that mean girls go to live with their husbands’ families, while boys remain with, and financially support, their parents” (Jain & Kurz, 2007: 9; Smaak & Varia, 2015: 4). In the Gambia, parents with large families sometimes marry off girls as young as 13 in an attempt to conserve household resources. Likewise, in Kenya, some parents view marriage as a way to decrease the general household expenses of feeding, clothing and educating children, particularly the girls (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 31).

Parents may also marry off their daughters to older, wealthier men in the hope of lifting their daughters out of poverty and providing them with an opportunity for a better life (as she is now taken care of by another family). Simultaneously, this likely creates familial links which could possibly help the girl’s family in the long run as the groom may be able to help her family when they are facing hard times (*Girls Not Brides*, 2015, Smaak & Varia, 2015, CHR & ACSRRW, 2018). In certain instances, the girls “consent” to these unions as they hold onto the hopes of a

better life; but, more often than not, the negative consequences of child marriage out-weigh these supposed benefits (Smaak & Varia, 2015, Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindemans, 2014). In Cameroon and Mali, it is reported that “poor parents sometimes specifically seek out well-off men in order to provide their daughters a way out of destitution” (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 31). Such data shows how “poverty also plays a role in making children vulnerable to transactional relationships, which in some cases lead to child marriage” (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 32). The complexity of the effect of poverty goes even further as poverty is linked to other drivers of child marriage including the lack of education and inadequate birth and marriage registration systems (Hodgkinson, 2016).

2.5.2.4 Lack of education

Across Africa there is a close link between school dropout rates and child marriage. Although school enrolment and levels of education are low for both sexes in several countries in the region, research shows clear gender disparities with more boys than girls enrolling in and staying in school (McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons & Klugman, 2015). This can often be linked to the socio-cultural factors that hinder access to education, particularly for girls. This includes the idea that, when family resources are limited and it is impossible for the parents to pay for fees for all their children, it is more sensible to educate the male child as “boys represent the family line” (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 32). This occurs as some parents are oblivious to the value in educating a girl child, especially as girls will later become married and move away from the family, ultimately contributing to the income of the family they marry into. Her original family is then thought to not benefit from having educated her, thus making her education not worth investing in (Hodgkinson, 2016).

According to Girls Not Brides (2017c: par. 1), across the world “over 60% of women (20-24) with no education were married before 18 and girls with no education are 3 times as likely to marry by 18 as those with a secondary or higher education”. Girls with poor, little or no education are more vulnerable than their educated counterparts as they have limited options and opportunities for employment. This leaves marriage as a viable option which they can use in an attempt to better their lives. Sadly, within these unions, their agency is often considerably more limited than their educated counterparts and their husbands make decisions regarding the way

these women live their lives– leaving little room for empowerment (McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons & Klugman, 2015; CHR & ACSRRW, 2018).

The challenges which uneducated girls face ultimately increase their vulnerability to poverty by hindering their empowerment. This sets the stage for economic and social dependence as they cannot access various opportunities and options which are available to the educated (Hodgkinson, 2016). Low income opportunities such as care work and domestic work in the homes of others are what often remain, which is unfortunate as girls who complete secondary school are “up to six times less likely to marry as children compared to girls who have little or no education” (Girls Not Brides, 2017c: par.1).

Although the focus is often on the socio-economic factors that affect school going rates, it is also necessary to acknowledge the cultural and institutional factors that affect girls’ education. The institutional factors include inaccessibility of schools, inadequate infrastructure, lack of gender sensitivity training for teachers, and “the lack of gender responsive budgets and gender imbalances among teachers” (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 33;McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons & Klugman, 2015;Girls Not Brides, 2017c). Cultural attitudes that restrict women to the domain of care work also act as barriers to education. In some cases, girls may even be withdrawn from school so that they can take on the role of care workers within the home. Reports have suggested that this is the case in South Africa, particularly in the face of the HIV and AIDS pandemic as many family members fall ill (CHR &ACSRRW, 2018).

2.5.2.5 Legal frameworks and gaps in laws and enforcement

Across the region, child marriage is sometimes driven by a number of features related to the prevailing legal systems which allow and, at times, even promote this practice. These features include the existence of plural legal systems. As previously stated, “legal frameworks play a powerful role in transforming norms and protecting girls’ rights” (Smaak & Varia, 2015: 5). This is done by setting 18 as the legal minimum age of marriage for girls and boys, and putting in place birth and marriage registration systems along with family laws that regulate “marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance” (Smaak & Varia, 2015: 5). Many countries across the region have plural legal systems which include “a common or civil law system influenced by European law... alongside one or more traditional, religious or customary legal systems that may or may

not be constitutionally recognised but are nevertheless observed” (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 34). This legal pluralism leads to complications when it comes to dealing with cases of child marriage, as these systems co-exist but are often inconsistent with each other – particularly the customary law as it tends to be at odds with liberal democratic constitutions (Smaak & Varia, 2015).

Ideally the legal systems within a country sit on a hierarchy where the constitution supersedes customary law. However, in practice, lay people are often unaware of the provisions laid out in their constitution or would just rather rely on customary or religious systems which out rightly seek to regulate familial matters and are considered an integral part of their culture and way of life (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018; Hodgkinson, 2016). The ambiguity of the status of the “different and conflicting laws within the same statutory legal system”, as a result, leads to legal uncertainty (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 35). For example, in South Africa, although the state and courts recognise customary law as binding, the constitution is considered superior and this has led to some customary marriage practices being deemed unlawful as they are at odds with the constitution. Even though this is the case, and child marriage is forbidden in South Africa because of the binding instruments to which the country has assented, it appears that parental consent or the consent of a guardian allows for children between 12 and 18 to become legally married. Due to this loophole, people continue to practice child marriage and those who refuse to marry, or try to leave a marriage, can often be severely stigmatised by their families or their community (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018).

At least 20 African countries “allow girls to marry below the age of 18 through their minimum age laws or through exceptions for parental consent or judicial approval” (Smaak & Varia, 2015: 5). This means that even in countries where 18 may be set as the minimum age for marriage according to one part of the civil law, the law may also recognise certain situations in which exceptions are made and children are allowed to marry. For example, the new Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act in Malawi sets 18 as the minimum age for marriage. However, Section 22 (7) of the Malawian constitution has provisions that allow for individuals between 15 and 18 to marry as long as parental consent is given. In other cases, civil law may state a minimum age for marriage and yet customary law operates without a minimum age (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018).

The ongoing existence of child marriage throughout Africa also demonstrates the problems of aligning the people's practices with "'top-down' legal frameworks like national constitutions and international treaties". (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 35). Insight into this is possible by reviewing the situation in Gambia where there are still significant gaps in "the effective implementation and enforcement" of laws and policies on child marriage even though the state has been geared towards the promotion of children's rights and their protection by laying down legislative and policy frameworks towards this end, which included harmonising the nation's legislation such that it aligns with the ratified international legal instruments that deal with child related matters (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 35). The result has been continuing ambiguity where the legal status of child marriage is concerned and, in the end, the weak enforcement of laws against child marriage therefore decreasing the impact and effectiveness of these laws (Smaak & Varia, 2015). The police and other enforcers of these laws may also have minimal or no training regarding the ways of dealing with child marriage cases, along with a lack of willpower to involve themselves in the prevention of child marriage, as this means involving themselves in what they might consider to be private matters (Smaak & Varia, 2015).

2.5.2.6 Inadequacy of registration procedures

The most effective way of ensuring that minimum age requirements are met and both parties can consent to a marriage is by verifying birth certificates which are produced before the couple is joined together. Unfortunately, birth registration systems in Africa usually fail to regulate child marriage as registration procedures are often inadequate, especially in rural areas. The well-known unsatisfactory nature of birth registration systems across the continent plays a significant role in allowing child marriages to continue as it becomes extremely difficult to verify ages at all due to the sheer lack of birth certificates which legally document one's date of birth. The Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey of 2010 showed that "only 16 percent of children in Tanzania under age 5 have been registered with civil authorities, and only about half of these children received a birth certificate" (Smaak & Varia, 2015: 5). On this basis, it becomes impossible to enforce laws which prohibit child marriage. Indeed, reports from Cameroon, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo have shown that the lack of birth certificates is a cause of child marriage within these countries, alongside the submission of fake certificates or forged electoral cards (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018).

In some cases, birth registration certificates are available but are not handed over to officials for verification or are handed over but are not verified correctly, therefore allowing for underage individuals to get married (Smaak & Varia, 2015). Sometimes, corruption comes into play as officials can be bribed to overlook the lack of a birth certificate. Police officers and religious leaders can also be paid to forge birth certificates to falsify the age of the child therefore knowingly playing a role in the facilitation of child marriages (Smaak & Varia, 2015; Hodgkinson, 2016). Furthermore, cases of child marriage may not make it to court as they can easily be postponed or adjourned indefinitely after the guilty parties pay off the magistrates.

Looking more specifically at the registration of marriages across the region, there is the common problem of people failing to register or record their marriages even though Article 6(d) of the Maputo Protocol states that all marriages are to be registered (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018). There are several reasons why this is the case, including the lack of domestic laws which clearly state the requirements or procedures to be followed to ensure that all forms of marriage are registered as stipulated by the law; the lack of laws regulating the registration of religious and customary law marriages; and differing “marriage registries and registration processes” in pluralistic systems where different forms of marriage exist (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 36).

Significant confusion results in cases where different forms of marriage are regulated by separate laws which are often unconnected. This confusion in turn leads to “defective registration and ultimately to non-compliance with registration procedures” (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 36). However, even in cases where the law is clear about marriage registration requirements and procedures, logistical and administrative barriers make the marriage registration process taxing and expensive, therefore less likely. These barriers include registration fees (charged by at least 20 African countries) and limited places where one can go to register a marriage (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018). Thus, on top of the registration cost is the fact that registration halls are often few and far between, resulting in people incurring significant travel costs (particularly if they are travelling from a remote or rural area). It is in this reason that the lowest levels of registration can be found amongst people living in rural areas, which leaves a significant number of marriages not only unregistered but unrecorded as well. Additionally, child marriages are often in the form of traditional or customary marriages, which are generally less likely to be registered compared to other forms of marriage (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018).

2.5.2.7 Armed conflict and sexual violence

Studies have shown that the chances of child marriage are significantly increased in cases where armed conflict and instability exist. This is often a result of the disruption of everyday life caused by the violence, poverty and fear. Violence and the fear of violence in the form of torture, sexual violence, abduction and rape for example are used as weapons of war which can control communities and also exert dominance over them (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018). This can indirectly or directly lead to child marriages as people attempt to keep themselves (and their families) safe by marrying off their young girls to military officers or rebels to ensure that the girl and her family are protected (Hodgkinson, 2016, UNICEF, 2001). To give a couple of examples:

[O]ne father in North Kivu in the DRC [Democratic Republic of Congo] reported marrying his 14-year-old daughter to a military officer, arguing that this would protect her against rebel groups and rape. Similarly, there is evidence to suggest that following the conflict in Northern Uganda, some families forced their daughters to marry military officers in an attempt to defend family honour and secure protection for themselves and the girls (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018: 38).

Conflict can also lead to poverty and the disruption of education as people are displaced, with some even ending up as war refugees. As discussed earlier, both poverty and limited education can drive child marriage and this is no different in conflict situations. In Uganda for example, child marriage within the refugee population has been cited as being mostly driven by the need for economic and physical security and not by cultural factors (CHR & ACSRRW, 2018).

2.5.3 Consequences of child marriage

Child marriage has a range of consequences that stretch from the micro level to the meso and macro levels, thus affecting individuals, families and communities, and a country's social, economic and political environment (Wodon *et al*, 2017). These consequences manifest themselves through various indirect and direct pathways.

An exploration and identification of the multi-level consequences of child marriage is important so as to paint a clearer picture of its far-reaching effects that go beyond the personal. Such an

exploration also provides macro-level motivations for eliminating child marriage by considering the broader economic costs as well, instead of concentrating on the usual focus – which is the micro and meso levels only as put forward by social and human rights approaches to the problem (Wodon *et al*, 2017). The need for such an exploration was met in the form of a recent World Bank global report on economic costs associated with the negative impacts of child marriage. This report was drawn up in conjunction with the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) to encourage nations across the globe to increase their investments towards ending child marriage. To date, this report (which is based on a three year research project) stands as the most significant piece of literature on the subject matter and is therefore cited repeatedly in this section. The report was authored by Wodon and several others from the World Bank and the ICRW.

From the perspective of Wodon *et al* (2017), the largest effects of child marriage are related to the wives' educational attainments and earnings; the health of the children born to the young wives; and the nations' fertility and population growth. These effects sit on different levels of impact as discussed below. Other effects such as those related to experiences of violence or decreased female agency, are viewed by Wodon *et al* (2017) as reflections of greater familial or societal forces that undervalue women and women's roles and not as a result of the marriages themselves.

2.5.3.1 Consequences of child marriage on a micro level

Child marriage at the micro level impacts the lives of girls who are married before their 18th birthday. As stated in the introductory chapter, child marriage inhibits girls from realising a number of human rights including but not limited to “rights to health, education, equality and non-discrimination, consensual marriage, employment, and to live free from violence and discrimination” (Smaak & Varia, 2015: 8). The consequences of child marriage on individuals can therefore be categorised into physiological, economic, social and psycho-social effects. Although these categories can be identified conceptually, in reality they are inextricably linked as they feed into each other.

The transition from the role of a child to that of a wife is often a harsh one as it forces girls to give up their childhood (as a particular phase in life) and take up behaviours and practices

associated with marriage. This is contrary to the fact that, although the transition into marriage can be considered as “a key component of the transition to adulthood in most contexts, marriage, in and of itself, is not necessarily a marker of adulthood” (Lloyd, 2005: 8; Walker, 2012). This is particularly the case when the girl is not mature enough to effectively shoulder the physical, physiological and psychological responsibilities associated with marriage and child bearing – which is more often the case than not (Panos Institute Southern Africa, 2015).

Child marriage affects the child’s emotional, mental and physical health as these aspects of a child’s health are put at risk on a day-to-day basis by placing them in a union with challenges for which they are not ready (Murray, 2008). In most cases, child brides are socially and economically isolated in their marriage because of the way they are stripped of the opportunity to learn and engage with others. This isolation is a direct result of being forced to drop out of school. Spending a significant amount of time carrying out household chores might also lead to depression and it acts as a barrier with reference to the opportunity to build strong social networks, becoming empowered and pursuing a future of their own choosing (Wodon *et al*, 2017; Sekhri & Debnath, 2014; Smaak & Varia, 2015; Sibanda, 2011). At times, teachers and school administrators orchestrate the expulsion of child brides from the education system because of the stigma associated with child marriage, even in the face of school policies meant to encourage the continued enrolment of child brides (Human Rights Watch, 2015). However, even if these girls do not drop out of school, interacting with peers may be a daunting task as education and marriage at such a young age are often viewed as incompatible (Murray, 2008). This is particularly true in cases where these girls also become mothers at this young age, which happens often as child marriage is closely associated with early child bearing (Smaak & Varia, 2015). Ultimately the results of dropping out of school because of child marriage drop the girls’ earning potential in adulthood, with each additional year of primary school resulting in approximately a 15% increase in potential future earnings. This figure increases with each additional year of education (Girls Not Brides & ICRW, 2016).

Although it is difficult to estimate the number of early child births that result from cases of child marriage, given the complexities within this relationship, the use of statistical approaches provides a rough idea of this (Wodon, 2017). Analysis carried out on data from 25 countries across the world estimates that about three of every four child births by women under the age of

18 may arise within a child marriage (Wodon, Male & Onagoruwa, 2017). Taking these statistical results into consideration, child marriage is considered as having a significant impact on the possibility of early child bearing, which has a range of health risks. The most significant risk is maternal mortality as “research shows that girls aged 10-14 are five times more likely to die during delivery than mothers aged 20-24; girls aged 15-19 are still twice as likely to die during delivery as women aged 20-24” (Smaak & Varia, 2015: 8). Other risks, such as prolonged or obstructed labour and obstetric fistula, are also a reality and can be quite disruptive for those experiencing suffering from them, particularly without any easy access to health care services.

Marital rape, sexual and domestic violence, and emotional abuse can also occur within these marriages, notably where the age gap between the spouses is large. A lack of social and health care services to cater for female child brides often leaves them trapped in these abusive marriages which affect their health and wellbeing on many levels (Smaak & Varia, 2015).

Tying all this together is the issue of gender inequality. Gender inequality is embedded within patriarchal views and practices which not only emphasise but reinforce and maintain unequal power relations; these relations place women in an inferior position to men, limiting their opportunities and agency. As put by Wodon *et al*, “child marriage not only impacts women’s voices, agency and decision making in the household after they are married but is also an expression of the lack of these characteristics for women in these societies” more broadly (2017: 64). Gender inequality can therefore be viewed not only as a driver of child marriage but as a consequence of this practice as well as it perpetuates patriarchal beliefs, systems and practices. Through the practice of child marriage, patriarchal rights are passed from a father to his son-in-law, particularly as younger girls are viewed as more submissive, docile and respectful (Hodgkinson, 2016). Under the care and control of her father and later her husband, who is often much older, a young girl’s agency is limited. She has no say in decisions about her own life including her sexual and reproductive health and has no claim on or control over the family land or property (UNICEF, 2001; CHR & ACSRRW, 2018). In this light, the child bride also has lower bargaining power to negotiate entry into the labour force. Although the effects of child marriage on entering the labour force are often considered minimal, where this challenge exists, it is linked to the limited agency that women face when they marry early.

2.5.3.2 Consequences of child marriage on a meso level

The second level on which the effects of child marriage are evident is in relation to the families started by this union, particularly the children born to child brides. Girls who are married before they are age 18 face the risk of intimate partner violence in their homes. This violence can have effects that go beyond the bride herself and immediate environment. Children who grow up in violent homes are negatively impacted by the violence even in cases where they simply bore witness to their mother being abused without them ever having been assaulted themselves. This could influence how they go about relating to their own children and families in the future. Additionally, economic costs are incurred by the household and the economy as victims of violence often need to access health care services (McClellan & Bocinski, 2017; Wodon *et al*, 2017).

As well, child marriage's negative impact on a mother's educational attainment may have both direct and indirect negative effects on her children's education, although the statistical significance differs across countries (Wodon, 2017; Patel *et al*, 2018). Limited social skills, social networks and lifetime earnings, which arise from the child bride dropping out of school, will in turn have effects on her children. It is quite likely that the children of a child bride living in poverty will in turn have limited access to earnings, social networks and social skills, thus resulting in a cycle of poverty, and possibly child marriage as well. This is linked to the fact that children born to women who did not finish their schooling are more unlikely to attain a secondary school qualification (Parsons *et al*, 2015; Patel *et al*, 2018). For example, research carried out in developing countries suggests that children whose parents achieved at least some level of secondary education are three times more likely to stay in school compared to those with parents who dropped out earlier (Patel *et al*, 2018). The level of a mother's education also affects her children's health, with evidence pointing towards less educated women being more likely to have children who are not immunised against childhood diseases and who are less healthy in terms of their nutrition (Parsons *et al*, 2015).

Most children born to girls below the age of 18 are born to child brides. According to the World Health Organisation (2012), in the developing world, 90% of the girls who give birth before their 18th birthday are already married at the time (cited in Presler-Marshall & Jones, 2012). Although more recent evidence suggests a drop in adolescent pregnancy across the world, the figures are

still quite high. Evidence collected across 18 countries in different parts of the world from 2015 to 2016 shows that about 75% of girls who have children before their 18th birthday do so because of marriage (Wodon *et al*, 2017). This has serious health implications as children born to young mothers often experience stunted growth as adults and are more likely to die below the age of five (Presler-Marshall & Jones, 2012). This stunted growth, which has an overall negative effect on the child's development later in life, results from children going without adequate nutrition for long periods of time. Adolescent mothers are also more likely to give birth to pre-term babies or babies with a low birth weight. Other health problems may also develop on top of these, partially because of the mothers' ill-health, immaturity and lack of access to health services (Nour, 2006).

Lastly, lower education and higher fertility rates impact upon household consumption as families may find themselves unable to provide for basic needs not only due to their low earning potential but also because of the early child bearing and larger family size (Wodon, 2017; Wodon *et al*, 2017). Additionally, in relation to children born to child brides, labour productivity and potential earnings during adulthood are negatively affected as a result of early growth and development difficulties.

2.5.3.3 Consequences of child marriage on a macro level

At a national level, child marriage limits a nation's ability to develop and reduce poverty (Girls Not Brides: 2019c; Presler-Marshall & Jones, 2012). According to Wodon *et al* (2017: 8), "the global economic costs associated with the impacts of child marriage on fertility and population growth, children's health, and education are particularly large". By the year 2030, it is estimated that the effects of child marriage would have cost populations in the developing world the equivalent of trillions of US dollars (Wodon, 2017).

Regression analysis and simulation tools show that, when child birth begins at an early age, women are more likely to have more children. For example, girls who marry at 13 have - on average - 26% more children over their lifetime compared to those who married over the age of 18. This links to a higher national fertility rate and population growth, and various economic costs related to this (Wodon *et al*, 2007). One such cost is the increase in costs incurred by governments in the attempt to provide basic services to the population such as education and

health care. Looking more closely at health care costs, not only may they increase due to population growth, but also due to increases in costs associated with caring for stunted adults and the high maternal or infant mortality rates associated with early child bearing. Further, this macro analysis can be conducted from the angle of lost potential earnings from these groups, with a reduction in maternal mortality, under-five mortality and adult stunting leading to significant economic benefits for countries as less money is spent on health care provision and more people are able to enter the work force (Wodon *et al*, 2017).

Given the many points raised above, it becomes of great importance that child marriage lessens in its prevalence and that mechanisms be put in place to mitigate its consequences for those who are already in such situations.

2.5.4 Efforts to prevent child marriage and support married girls

Preventing child marriage and supporting married adolescents is an important strategy when it comes to advancing women's rights and empowerment in various areas, including freedom from violence, the right to education, the right to work, the right to health and the right to participate in public life (Smaak & Varia, 2015). Although specific interventions are being rolled out across different sectors and levels depending on the drivers of child marriage within each national context, research by different NGOs and UN agencies has shown that there are specific interventions or programmatic strategies that have proven to be effective in reducing rates of child marriage and supporting married girls (Girls Not Brides, 2016b; ICRW, 2013). These interventions or strategies focus on empowering girls, mobilising all relevant stakeholders, providing economic support, and establishing enforceable laws and policies (Girls Not Brides, 2016b). More specifically, these entail: empowering girls with information, skills and support networks; educating and rallying parents and community members; enhancing girls access to high quality education; providing economic support and incentives to girls and their families; and, lastly, encouraging integrated, comprehensive and supportive laws and policies (ICRW, 2013). The most successful programmes make use of a cross-sectoral approach, focusing their efforts at the individual, family, community and institutional levels therefore making use of a combination of these five strategies (Glinski, Magnolia & Meyers, 2015).

Empowering girls can occur in various ways, which often includes providing access to education, skills, information and supportive networks for those at risk of and those already in

child marriage (Glinski, Magnolia & Meyers, 2015). Programmes can be designed to keep girls in school or to make it easier for child bride school drop outs to re-enter the education system. This can include the provision of scholarships and school uniforms, offering adequate sanitation at the school, ensuring pregnant girls are not expelled, providing the option of night school or part-time schooling, as well as “improving the safety and girl-friendliness of schools, strengthening school curricula and making school lessons relevant to girls’ lives” (ICRW,2013: 2; Smaak & Varia, 2015). Through supportive networks, such as group-based programmes, girls can be shielded from the social and economic isolation resulting from child marriage while also receiving training which equips them with life-skills, confidence, financial literacy, communication and negotiation skills, livelihood support and increased aspirations; further, in some cases, resources can be given directly to the girls (Glinski, Magnolia & Meyers, 2015; ICRW, 2013). Information regarding their sexual and reproductive health and corresponding rights can be shared along with providing access to sexual and reproductive health services, including emergency obstetric care and contraception (Smaak & Varia, 2015). Girls can be empowered as agents of change by providing support for them as they envision alternative roles within society and advocate for change so as to create paths towards these roles for themselves and their peers (Girls Not Brides, 2016b).

Involving all relevant stakeholders is an essential part of ending child marriage, as each group of individuals needs to be willing to commit to this aim. This commitment should happen with them having a clear understanding of their role within the process. Relevant stakeholders include girls and boys; their families and communities; community and religious leaders; government officials, police, prosecutors and the judiciary; school teachers and administrators; health care workers; and the media (Smaak & Varia, 2015). By raising awareness of child marriage and its harmful consequences, and by discussing alternatives while forging a different view of girls and their value, a shift in attitudes towards child marriage can be encouraged. In doing this, there is a reduction of the acceptance of child marriage within families and the community at large (Girls Not Brides, 2016b). Additionally, various activities can be used to address the social norms which encourage and perpetuate child marriage. These activities include “community dialogues, mobilisation of religious and community leaders, formation of child-protection committees, and information education and communication strategies (including multimedia campaigns)” (Glinski, Magnolia & Meyers, 2015: 16).

Although changing attitudes is useful, even where the consequences of child marriage are known and girls valued, child marriage is still sometimes viewed as the only viable option. Providing economic support and incentives can therefore be an additional strategy to safeguard the future of many girls by reducing the need for child marriage. In some cases, conditional cash transfer programmes provide incentives for parents to keep girls enrolled in school and unmarried until the age of 18, as this is pegged as a condition for them to receive either money or a physical resource. Girls can be given the “opportunity to learn an income generating skill”, thus allowing them to be viewed as “adding more value to the family” – as they can generate an income in the future and provide economic relief to the entire household (ICRW, 2013: 2).

Laws and policies, along with national strategies to combat child marriage, are needed to guide and consolidate “how authorities handle cases of child marriage” (Smaak & Varia, 2015). Although an enabling legal and policy framework is insufficient on its own, the integration of prevention and response services would help to create a strong foundation on which to advocate for “improvements in services and changes in social norms and girls’ empowerment” (Glinski, Magnolia & Meyers, 2015: 16). This integration could assist as well with the creation of “a comprehensive and holistic strategy for reducing and mitigating the effects” of child marriage through increased effectiveness of government efforts (Glinski, Magnolia & Meyers, 2015: 16; Smaak & Varia, 2015; Girls Not Brides, 2016b).

In cases where legislation against child marriage does not exist, “advocating for policy and legal reform is a critical first step” (ICRW, 2013:3). Policy reform is also necessary in situations where laws need to be harmonised. This is often the case within countries that have a pluralistic legal system where customary law often contradicts and overrides national law in practice, making enforcement of child marriage laws difficult (Girls Not Brides, 2016b). Training for government officials who handle child marriage cases is equally important to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities and are well equipped to investigate cases of child marriage and of forged birth and marriage certificates, prosecuting those responsible for this (Smaak & Varia, 2015).

2.6 Conclusion

The practice of child marriage is one that has existed as a normal part of marriage practices in all parts of the world at one point or another, with changing views around marriage and family

formation only coming to the fore to change ideas around child marriage in the last four centuries. These changes in the understandings of marriage and what it entails were an inevitable part of the changing socio-economic environment in the West, and later in other parts of the world as well. Given the different cultures across the globe, there are both inter-country and intra-country differences in the forms in which child marriage appears. Likewise, differences also exist in the reasons behind the practice and the ways in which the practice can be addressed (be it in the way of preventing further cases or mitigating the effects of child marriage on those already in this position). Across the globe many countries have taken a development and human rights approach to child marriage, adopting a stand against child marriage by formulating various treaties that call for an end to child marriage. Despite these changes, much still needs to be done to align laws and close off any loopholes that allow for the practice to continue to exist, particularly across Africa. It has been said that failure to do so will not only continue to impact the lives of girls but will also impact development across the world.

CHAPTER 3: MARRIAGE IN ZIMBABWE

3.1 Introduction

In pre-colonial times, marriage amongst the Shona was regulated solely by Shona customary law. Marriage was viewed as a relationship-building venture which brought two families together (*kubatanidza ukama*) and the negotiation and payment of *roora* (bride wealth) from one family to another formed the basis of the normative marriage customs which varied slightly across ethnic groups within the wider Shona population (Jones, 2015; Meekers, 1994). This chapter explores child marriage in Zimbabwe, zoning in on the trends, drivers and consequences of child marriage. The types of marriages amongst the Shona along with the changes in marriage practices are used as a backdrop on which the issue of child marriage in Zimbabwe can be viewed. The focus is on the Shona as they make up approximately 82% of the Zimbabwean population and are also the population group used for this study.

Before going further, I would like to note that the use of the word ‘traditional’ is used to refer to pre-colonial practices while ‘modern’ is used to refer to colonial and post-colonial practices. Where the terms are used to denote a time period, the same applies. I acknowledge, however, that ‘tradition’ is not something that is static and is open to historical change. Furthermore, the use of the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ does not entail a moral distinction whereby practices which are modern are considered rational and progressive and those labelled as traditional are irrational and regressive. The use of these terms is simply to differentiate between two different ways of life, one existing prior to any colonial influence and the other emerging out of the interaction with the colonial system.

3.2 Types of Shona marriages

Although there was traditionally one ideal type of marriage amongst the Shona known as *kukumbira*, there were also various other forms of marriage that existed. According to Chitakure, this was done “to ensure that anybody who wanted to marry would have the opportunity to do so” as marriage was thought to bring together not only couples and families but also entire clans

and ancestors (2016:34). This section explores some of the types of marriage while those more directly related to child marriage are discussed later.

While a few groups with strong patrilineal ties sometimes had/have some sort of wedding ceremony at a certain stage in the process, most probably when the bride leaves her childhood home and moves to her husband's home, Weinrich (1982) does not consider this to be the equivalent of a specific point where the union begins. With that in mind, it was and still is often the case that customary marriages in sub-Saharan Africa do not have an official ceremony that marks the beginning of the union. This often makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint the beginning of matrimony as various stages such as courtship, negotiation and cohabitation blend into each other, sometimes spreading over many years (Mitchell, 1961; Mittelbeeler, 1976; Bledsoe & Cohen, 1993; Mawere & Mawere, 2010). For the pre-colonial Shona, the process of union formation was generally centred on the payment of the bride wealth, with different types of marriages having different steps that led to the payment of bride wealth as a way of formalising the union (Holleman, 1969). Given that bridewealth was a central part of the marriage process, it was “difficult for someone brought up in such a culture to conceive of a proper marriage without payments” (Bourdillon, 1993: 36). Any unions that existed without the payment of bride wealth were not officially recognised by the families and were even sometimes equated to prostitution or casual sexual unions (Bourdillon, 1993; Mangena & Ndlovu, 2013).

The terms *pfuma* or *roora* are used to refer to the bride wealth in its totality and the term *pfuma* is also used to refer to a specific part of the payment. Traditionally, the payment of bride wealth was often carried out in a series of instalments which included two major payments, the first being *rusambo* which transferred sexual rights to the son-in-law and the second one being *pfuma* which gave the son-in-law rights over the children born within the marriage. More often than not, this distinction meant that the payment of bride wealth was only completed at least after the birth of the first child which served as proof that the bride was indeed fertile (Meekers, 1993). Additionally, the union forming process was further drawn out because it was expected that, even if the son-in-law could afford to make all the payments, his family had to negotiate the price and make the payments in instalments over time so as to not disrespect his in-laws. This also stretched out the payment process and played a role in relationship-building between the two families. Some payments were even drawn out over a life-time, in particular in cases where the

son-in-law's family had limited resources; but, this was not considered much of a problem as it simply reflected the ongoing nature of the union-forming process (Udry, Dole & Gleiter, 1992; Bourdillon, 1987).

3.2.1 *Kukumbira* (marriage by request)

Kukumbira directly translates to “asking for” and refers to the form of marriage where a man asks for a woman's hand in marriage from her parents, having already received her consent. This form of marriage was (and still is) the most ideal. It is viewed as “the noblest, most legitimate and most desired” marriage as the process includes entire families and ushers in the marriage in a way that has the approval of not only the couple but the two families as well (Chitakure, 2016: 34). In the past, the process would be initiated by the exchange of small tokens between the couple, as a sign that they indeed love each other and were ready to officialise their relationship. The man would then approach his future bride's paternal aunt (*tete*) who would assist him and the *munyayi* (go-between) to set up the date for the bride wealth negotiations (Kileff & Kileff, 1970). The woman would only be allowed to join her husband and his family after a significant part of the bride wealth (or at least the *rusambo*) had been paid as this legitimised the sexual aspect of the union. The giving of gifts and money also occurred when the woman was taken to her husband's home after having followed the *kukumbira* channel. It was a way for the groom's family to welcome the bride and show their approval and acceptance of her (Holleman, 1969).

In present-day Zimbabwe, this form of marriage is even acknowledged by the Christian churches and it is held in high esteem for a number of reasons, including the belief that it shows the high moral standards held by the bride and her family as co-habitation (and assumedly sexual intercourse) only occur after bride wealth has been paid (Chitakure, 2016).

3.2.2 *Kutema ugariri* (labour/service marriage)

This form of marriage (*kutema ugariri*) was termed labour or service marriage. It ensured that even men from underprivileged families could marry as those who could not afford to pay the bridewealth would offer to work at the father in law's farm for a set amount of time in exchange for his daughter (Holleman, 1969; Bourdillon 1987; Shoko, 2016). However, not all parents agreed to such an arrangement so a man had to find such a family first. The time frame worked for was negotiated between the man and the family he wanted to marry from, with the time frame

usually ranging around ten years. This type of marriage had three possible forms. More specifically, a man worked for a daughter who was yet to be born, and then she would be handed over to him as a wife after she reached puberty; he worked for a young girl who was not yet old enough to marry, who would then also be given to him after puberty should he have completed the work; or he worked for a woman with whom he was already in love. In the last instance, there were cases where parents would allow the two to marry even before the stipulated time for labour had lapsed, trusting that the son-in-law would keep his word and complete his service. Additionally, he and his wife would have to stay on the father-in-law's land until the end of his services. As Chitakure notes, "patience and ability to work were two of the most desirable virtues for labour bridewealth" (2016: 36). Although this type of marriage shows how "the marital needs of all Shona men were respected and fulfilled, even if they could not pay bride wealth", there was stigma attached to this practice (Chitakure, 2016: 37). This is because it was a form of marriage for the poor and signified the man's low financial standing. Furthermore, it brought no wealth to the family. This was problematic as the bride wealth received would be used to later pay for the bride's brothers to also marry. Other problems were, firstly, the age difference between the man and his future wife in the first two instances mentioned above; secondly, the fact that her family could take advantage of the man or change their mind; and, thirdly, that this form of marriage violated the girl's right to choice as she often had no say in the matter. This type of marriage was slowly phased out and no longer exists because of urbanisation and the monetisation of the national economy under colonialism, which was driven by industrialisation and the rise of wage labour (Chitakure, 2016).

3.2.3 *Musengabere (marriage by abduction)*

Musengabere was another type of marriage which means 'to carry a hyena and run away with it'. It was often practiced by young men from wealthy families who could afford to pay large amounts of bride wealth and would therefore be more likely to get approval from the potential father-in-law (Chitakure, 2016). Young men whose advances and declarations of love had been rejected could ambush the object of their affection when she was out doing chores such as fetching water and firewood. The young man would grab her by the hand and force her to walk to his village and, if she refused, he would carry her over his shoulders. Once arriving at his parents' home, she could no longer run away as she was already considered a wife and his family

would guard her until the marriage negotiations began. This was only done with young women who were considered mature enough for marriage and, in traditional Shona society it was a legal way to enter into a union and could even result in a long and happy marriage. Given the many disadvantages linked to this practice, such as forcing the woman into marriage, and also the belief that “it was used as a desperate and last resort by a disillusioned and desperate man”, most Shona groups despised this and it has long since been abandoned (Chitauke, 2016: 38).

3.2.4 *Kuganha* (marriage by imposition)

Kuganha means “to impose oneself upon another, particularly for marriage purposes” (Chitakure, 2016: 38). It is regarded by some as the female equivalent of *musengabere* as a rejected woman could take her belongings and demand a boy’s hand in marriage once she had arrived at one of his relatives’ houses. According to Shoko, such a woman could not be resisted by her chosen partner as the Shona considered a wife or husband as a gift from the ancestors and “the choice of the ancestors is more valid than human choice” (2016: 27). This form of marriage to some extent was demeaning to the woman and also lowered her family’s bargaining power for bride wealth; as well, the husband would often marry a second wife. This practice has been long abandoned.

3.2.5 *Kutizisa* (elopement marriage)

Kutizisa refers to the process of causing a woman to run away. This occurred when a young man and woman were in love and the young man’s family possibly could not afford to go through the *kukumbira* channel of marriage or when a couple simply wanted to speed up the marriage process. The couple would then arrange with the woman’s paternal aunt (*tete*) for the man’s family to collect her from the aunt’s home. As they got close to the husband’s home, the woman would walk slower and take several breaks in walking to the home, as the relatives were to persuade her to walk by giving her gifts and money. She was required to sit down and refuse to walk if they refused to give her money or merely made promises to give her once arrived at the home. These gestures were separate from bride wealth payments and were simply meant to coax the woman into the home (Chitakure, 2016). The process of *kutizisa* occurred with the mother’s knowledge and a day later the mother had to inform one of the husband’s relatives that the daughter had eloped and the family then awaited the negotiating team to start the *roora* process,

which began with the payment of a fee called *tsvakirai kuno* which means “look for her from us” (Shoko, 2016: 27).

Kutizisa differs from *kukumbira* because the couple starts living together as husband and wife before any part of the bride wealth has been paid. This decreased the father-in-law’s bargaining power as the groom’s family could halt the negotiations because of high charges without this then stopping the couple from living together. However, the father-in-law could forcibly remove his daughter; but, this was not considered worth the effort as the wife could just elope again or the husband would then not follow up (Chitakure, 2016; Meekers 1993).

3.2.6 *Kutizira/Kutiza mukumbo* (flight marriage)

Kutizira refers to the process of a woman ‘running away to’ a man and it is what Holleman (1969) refers to as a flight marriage while others refer to it as elopement. In this thesis, to avoid confusion between *kutizisa* and *kutizira*, I use the term flight marriage to refer to *kutizira*. It was often practiced after a man had impregnated a girl before marriage. The two may have been a couple but, with the man temporarily absent or unwilling to carry out the *kutizisa* process, the girl would then take it upon herself to elope to his home without his prior knowledge or that of her relatives. This move was carried out with the intention to force the families to start marriage negotiations (Holleman, 1969; Chitakure, 2016).

Kutizira was often viewed as an act of desperation and it had the danger that the man may refuse responsibility for the girl; however, an intervention which included counselling from the elders led regularly to the man eventually accepting her (Holleman, 1969; Chitakure, 2016). If this failed, the girl would have to return home and then her family would arrange to go to the man’s home to request a payment of ‘damages’ for impregnating an unwed girl and then refusing to marry her. Sometimes the woman was accepted but not the child, so she would have to send the child to her parents once born if she agreed to live with the man.

Although the woman could potentially be rejected, women still used *kutizira* as a strategy as it was difficult for a single woman who had borne a child out of wedlock to then find a husband. Further, even if she did, she may have ended up separated from her children as these children sometimes could not be taken into the new union (Chitakure, 2016).

3.2.7 *Kugarwa nhaka* (widow inheritance)

Kugarwa nhaka refers to the practice of widow inheritance which is also known as levirate (Vijfhuizen, 2002). Holleman (1969) refers to this type of marriage as succession marriage. This practice involved a woman staying on in her marital home and being looked after by one of her deceased husband's brothers or male relatives, particularly if she was still in her reproductive years and had not given birth to any children (Holleman, 1969; Vijfhuizen, 2002). This practice has decreased in recent years due to the risk of spreading HIV within a family and the current emphasis on women's rights and their ability to choose their own fate (Huisman, 2005).

3.2.8 *Matenganagudo/Kutenganiswa* (exchange marriage)

Finally, *matenganagudo* refers to an exchange marriage which occurred when two families exchanged their daughters for marriage, which meant that no money would exchange hands as the exchange cancelled out the bride wealth payments (Kileff & Kileff, 1970; Holleman, 1969).

3.3 Changes in marriage customs

Marriage procedures have changed significantly from those that existed in pre-colonial times. As much as *kukumbira* is still deemed the most desirable form of marriage, Mawere and Mawere (2010) argue that the proportion of these *roora* marriages as compared to other types of marriages in urban Zimbabwe in particular is very low. Although the reasons behind the existence of certain types of marriage differ across historical periods, literature suggests that marriage trends in Zimbabwe are migrating towards the more unconventional forms of marriage. This is what others label as 'deviant' unions such as *kutizisa* (elopement marriage) and mere cohabitation which is locally referred to as *kubika mapoto* or just *mapoto* (Meekers, 1993). The word *mapoto* means pots and *kubika mapoto* loosely translates to 'cooking pots', which refers to the illegitimate use of a woman's cooking utensils. This is in some cases viewed as a euphemism for sexual intercourse as the union is loosely structured with no bride wealth having been paid. This type of union is therefore outside the marriage "structure imposed by tradition or the law"; however, given the definition of marriage used in this thesis, *mapoto* unions are also regarded as a form of marriage (Muzvidziwa, 2002: 138).

The “gradual erosion of normative marriage customs in favour of more informal types of unions” is driven by many different factors across different historical periods (Mawere & Mawere, 2010: 225). These factors include the disintegration of lineage control, socio-economic changes and the shift in the status of men and women. Jeater’s research on the construction of moral discourse in Southern Rhodesia from 1894 to 1930 posits that the onset of *mapoto* unions was a result of “freedom from lineage control” which created the perfect conditions for the existence of these unions and of prostitution as well (1993: 182). This was reflected by the fact that many urban women who engaged in these unions were orphans with weak or no lineage links to provide security and support, or they were women who had severed lineage links as they deprived their families of bride wealth by running away to town (Jeater, 1993). This rural-urban migration of women was resisted by traditional leaders and household heads as it decreased the control over women’s sexuality and labour, a fact which many women welcomed and in some cases was the exact reason why they were so bold as to run away (Jeater, 1993). In other cases, though, *mapoto* unions were simply a convenient source of accommodation and protection as provided by the male (Jeater, 1993). Although this form of marriage was considered deviant, “women in *mapoto* relationships did not consider their marriages inferior to those of other women”; in fact, Jeater argues that “there were precedents for these marriages in the elopements which instigated many rural marriages” (1993: 179).

As we approach the late 1900s and 2000s, explanations of *mapoto* unions and the decline in *kukumbira* marriages turn towards the commercialisation of *roora* coupled with economic decline in Zimbabwe, which created a situation where many prospective grooms were failing to raise the bride wealth amount required (Andifasi, 1970; Aschwanden, 1982; Janhi, 1970; Chabata, 2012; Mangena & Ndlovu, 2013). This commercialisation of bridewealth exists in such a way that the original intent of the payments is eroded and instead families seek to gain from the transaction. Unreasonably large amounts of money are requested and others include items such as expensive bottles of liquor, groceries, cellphones and in extreme cases even cars (Mangena & Ndlovu, 2013). Indeed, across many African countries, this commercialisation has been heavily criticised and has led young people to challenge normative marriage because of its current exploitative nature and also because they often cannot afford to make these payments.

Although many different motives are behind the commercialisation of *roora* in present-day Zimbabwe, this commercialisation is now viewed by some as expected and maybe even inevitable, as in modern times fathers have to invest significant money for daughters to be productive. Additionally, an educated daughter is considered a greater asset to the man who marries her. In other words, the higher the standard of education obtained by the daughter, the more likely is the possibility of her access to better paying jobs or opportunities to start her own company (Bourdillon, 1993). It is thus expected that the more educated a daughter is, the higher the bride price. Son-in-laws who are charged heavily during the *roora* process therefore often conclude that “they are paying the father-in-law back all the money they spent in educating their daughter” (Chigwedere, 1992 cited in Mvududu *et al.*, 2002: 10; May 1983; Chabata, 2012).

In pre-colonial times, *roora* was “perceived as a symbol of unity between the families of the bride and the groom” (Mvududu *et al.*, 2002: 10). The payment of bride wealth was in order for the groom’s family to secure uxorial and genitricial rights³ from the bride’s family, to compensate the bride’s family for the loss of productivity as a woman’s productive labour would be shifted from her family to her husband’s family, and as a token of appreciation for the in-law’s role in caring for and raising the bride (Andifasi, 1970; Mvududu *et al.*, 2002; Chabata, 2012; Mangena & Ndlovu, 2013). Bride wealth in present-day Zimbabwe seems to have a new function of compensating the father for the cost of raising a daughter, showing how “an old tradition applied in new circumstances comprises a new and different tradition” (Bourdillon, 1993: 39). In Zimbabwe, young couples increasingly oppose the payment of *roora*, at least in part, because the amount of *roora* commonly demanded by a girl’s family has become extremely high and beyond their reach. Instead of *roora* payments bringing together families as they did in the past, where payments were made gradually over time thus maintaining contact, marriage payments now create tension between families and in marriages. This often results in young couples struggling to start their lives together as a family as the husband has debts to repay or has used all his savings on bride wealth (Bourdillon, 1993). This financial hardship following *roora* is another reason why others opt to enter into unconventional unions instead.

³Uxorial rights refer to the duties a spouse is obliged to perform for his/her partner whilst genitricial rights refer to reproductive rights over children (Mitchell, 1961).

Obbo's (1980) work offers another angle into this matter, suggesting that the urbanised, modern Shona women's resentment of the subordination of women to their husbands (as is 'traditionally' expected by the Shona) is one of the reasons behind the decline in *kukumbira* marriages. This resentment is thought to particularly arise in cases where bride wealth and the value of virginity are high, thus creating an environment where males, particularly in the form of fathers and brothers, are interested in controlling women's sexual behaviour and marriage patterns as they benefit from marrying off a virgin (Obbo, 1980). Given that men have been always in charge of the negotiation process, and that the process itself involves the transfer of a girl from her father's care to the care of her husband, the paying of *roora* is often associated with patriarchal attitudes that lead to the subordination of women and in some cases even their abuse as husbands take the payment of *roora* to mean they now control the woman (Kambarami, 2006; Dube, 2013). In an attempt to flee from the conflict that could arise from resisting control over marriage options, a growing number of women therefore steer clear of bride wealth marriages, opting instead to retain their liberty by going for unmarried cohabitation or temporary lovers. Resisting formal marriages also has the added benefit that the women's chosen partners will have limited or no authority over them and certainly no claim over their income or labour (Mawere & Mawere, 2010).

While many argue that 'modernity' and colonialism had a negative effect on the traditional forms of marriage not only across Africa but in Zimbabwe more specifically, Holleman (1969) posits that most marriages in the past were in fact of the elopement type (i.e. *kutizira* or *kutizisa*), with very few couples opting to start living together only after the first marriage payment (in the form of the full *rusambo* or a significant part of it) had been made. However, even if this may be true, therefore possibly indicating a constant trend in *kukumbira* marriages and not a decline as believed by others, the reasons behind the preference for elopement marriages have changed. Along with this, changes in the frequency of other marriage practices have also been influenced by the way in which marriage is perceived and governed by legal and customary structures. For example, some forms of marriage like *kugara nhaka* (widow inheritance) are now strongly discouraged while still others are now prohibited by the law due to negative outcomes of these unions.

The 1951 Customary Marriages Act [Chapter 5: 07] in Section 11 clearly states that the pledging of girls and women in marriage is prohibited” and Section 15 insists on the requirement of consent by arguing the following: “Any person who by force, intimidation or other improper means compels or attempts to compel any African female to enter into a marriage against her will shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars or, in default of payment, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding twelve months”. These provisions ultimately criminalise some previously-accepted forms of marriage such as *musengabere* and those that could lead to child marriage like *kuputswa* (marriage in exchange for food) and *kuripa ngozi* (appeasement marriage), as discussed more fully later.

While some customary or traditional marriage practices are declining, there is simultaneously an increasing recognition of the importance of civil marriages, even though they are often accessories to the customary procedures. In modern times, the distinction between the functions of *rusambo* and *pfuma* is not emphasised, and in fact can be said not to exist. That being the case, families may go as far as to expect full payment of the bride wealth along with a formal church wedding before the bride can officially leave her home of origin (Chitakure, 2016). Whereas families used to be satisfied with the traditional marriage practices alone, with time western marriage became considered as the ‘real’ marriage. In this way, traditional marriage rites became viewed as inferior practices to western marriage rites, with matrimonial symbols such as wedding rings and gowns being introduced in particular by Christian missionaries (Chiwome, 1994). In some African circles, customary marriage became “associated with semi-literate and non-literate Africans [whereby] even after the registration, the marriage was still considered to be inferior to the church and civil marriages which were associated with modernity” (Chiwome, 1994: 71).

The reason behind the church wedding is said to be not only an acknowledgement of the importance of Christianity amongst the Shona but also the solemnisation of the marriage through a marriage officer, thus creating a monogamous union which is thought to be more binding (Shoko, 2016). When church weddings were first introduced, most people could not afford the more expensive white wedding, with others even struggling to pay a significant portion of the bride price. Some couples who were fully traditionally married therefore “stayed in their despised ‘unblessed’ unions until they could afford the expensive white wedding” (Chiwome,

1994). This is still the case in present-day Zimbabwe, making this form of marriage not ideal for poorer men who cannot afford to pay— as the groom’s family is responsible for bearing the costs of all wedding procedures (Bourdillon, 1993). Such men therefore opt for either *kutizisa* (elopement marriages) or *mapoto* unions (co-habitation).

In middle class families where the man is able to raise money for the bridewealth and wedding ceremony, the couple may be fortunate enough to gain more than they spent on the wedding through the competitive gift-giving that often accompanies weddings in the Shona culture. This practice, whereby the family of the groom and bride “try to outdo each other in cash presents to the couple” is a form of modern Shona ‘tradition’ (Bourdillon, 1993: 35). It offsets the wedding expenses and in a way helps maintain the traditional symbols of past values as “the new situation is recognised and the young man is helped financially to found a new home rather than being drained of all his savings” (Bourdillon, 1993: 39-40). However, as mentioned earlier, in most cases there is not enough money for both bridewealth and the wedding therefore no wedding gifts are received by the couple.

3.4 Legislative framework with reference to marriage in Zimbabwe

Like many other previously colonised African countries, Zimbabwe has a dual legal system with both customary and general law (received and statute law) being recognised by the constitution. The result of this sometimes awkward co-existence is a pluralistic marriage system in which various forms of marriage are both possible and exist. As the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) notes, couples in Zimbabwe can choose between marriage in the form of cohabitation, an unregistered customary law marriage, a registered customary marriage, or a registered civil marriage, however, only those which are formally registered are recognised as valid by the law (2013). To each of these marriages is attached different rights and duties, with customary law governing customary marriages through the 1951 Customary Marriages Act [Chapter 5: 07] and general law governing the civil marriages through the 1964 Marriage Act [Chapter 5:11]. While unregistered customary unions are recognised in some cases (as mentioned below), the government does not recognise cohabitation at all although it is permissible.

3.4.1 Civil marriage and the Marriages Act [Chapter 5:11] (1964)

Civil marriage is a form of marriage in which an individual is “permitted by law to have only one spouse at any given point in time” (RAU, 2013: 6). The provisions for this type of marriage are found in the Marriages Act [Chapter 5:11] which is also often referred to as Chapter 37. This Act sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 for boys and 16 for girls. But, according to Section 22 of the Act, any boy or girl below these ages can enter into a valid marriage with the written consent of the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs “if s/he considers such marriage desirable” (Marriages Act [Chapter 5: 11]). Additionally, Section 20 of the Act allows for the marriage of minors should written consent be obtained from their parents, legal guardians or a judge of the High Court (Marriages Act [Chapter 5: 11]).

According to the Act, a legally designated marriage officer is required to preside over the marriage ceremony which ultimately ends with the signing of a marriage register in the presence of at least two witnesses above the age of 18. It is often the case in Zimbabwe that this type of marriage is preceded by the paying of a bride price by the groom to the bride’s family (RAU, 2013). Given that this type of marriage is registered and therefore recognised by the law, should the couple decide to divorce at any point, the divorce proceedings along with the division of matrimonial property often occurs through the court. The Matrimonial Causes Act [Chapter 5: 13] guides the court in the process as it stipulates what are to be considered as reasonable grounds for divorce and “provides for the just and equitable distribution of property”(RAU, 2013: 6). Should the marriage end because of the death of a spouse, the 1997 Administration of Estates Act comes into effect, ensuring that the surviving spouse and the children are the major beneficiaries and thus avoiding gender-based discrimination when it comes to issues of inheritance.

3.4.2 Customary marriage and the Customary Marriages Act [Chapter 5: 07] (1951)

Under the Customary Marriages Act [Chapter 5: 07] a man is permitted to have more than one wife at any given point should he choose to do so. Thus, customary marriages are potentially polygamous marriages. The Customary Marriages Act also does not include any age limits with regards to marriage, creating a loophole through which child marriage can be practiced.

The first type of marriage guided by customary law is the registered customary marriage which is solemnised by a customary marriage officer in the presence of a witness and it is a requirement that a marriage register be signed immediately after the solemnisation (Customary Marriages Act [Chapter 5: 07]). A registered customary marriage is recognised by the law as a valid marriage, meaning that the court is involved in divorce proceedings and the distribution of property should the marriage end. This type of marriage is also often preceded by the payment of a bride price. The second type of marriage is an unregistered customary law marriage which does not need a marriage officer to be present and is limited to the payment of a bride price by the groom (Customary Marriages Act [Chapter 5: 07]). In both cases, a man who wishes to marry another woman is not required to notify or receive consent from his current wife or wives (RAU, 2013).

While only the registered customary marriage is recognised by the law, the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) estimates that approximately 70% of Zimbabweans live in unregistered customary law unions (RAU, 2013). This is problematic as an unregistered customary union is only recognised as a valid marriage in cases of inheritance and child protection (for example, child maintenance and child custody) (Customary Marriages Act [Chapter 5: 07]; RAU, 2013). Where a divorce occurs, each party leaves the marriage with what they entered it with. This often leaves women at a disadvantage, especially housewives whose contribution to the family is more in the form of unpaid care work and household duties, as compared to monetary contributions towards building the home or purchasing the matrimonial property (RAU, 2013).

3.4.3 Challenging the marriage acts

On the 20th of January 2016, a Constitutional Court ruling on the case of *Mudzuru & Another v Minister of Justice & Others* in Zimbabwe declared all forms of child marriage illegal. This involved a ruling against Section 22(1) of the Marriage Act [Chapter 5:11] and “any other law, practice or custom authorising a person under 18 to marry”, including the Customary Marriages Act [Chapter 5: 07] – making them unconstitutional and invalid (Veritas, 2016: 1; *News Day*, January 20, 2016). Although all the marriage laws are still to be harmonised, the landmark ruling made it such that, moving forward, all persons below the age of 18 would be henceforth prohibited from legally marrying or entering into a union, “including a customary or religious

union” (Veritas, 2016: 1). This ruling was made after two young women, who had been in unions since an early age, Loveness Mudzuru (19) and Ruvimbo Tsopodzi (18), approached the court on the basis of Section 85(1) of the new (2013) constitution, “seeking relief from the infringement of the rights of girls subjected to early marriages”(Makoni, 2016: par 8). According to Section 85(1) of the constitution:

Any of the following persons, namely

- *Any person acting in their own interests;*
- *Any person acting on behalf of another person who cannot act for themselves;*
- *Any person acting as a member of, or in the interests, of a group or class of persons;*
- *Any person acting in the public interest;*
- *Any association acting in the interests of its members*

is entitled to approach a court, alleging that a fundamental right or freedom enshrined in this Chapter has been, is being or is likely to be infringed, and the court may grant appropriate relief, including a declaration of rights and an award of compensation.

When they approached the court, these young women sought for the Constitutional Court to declare child marriages unconstitutional, which included declaring Section 22 of the Marriages Act [Chapter 5:11] unconstitutional alongside the Customary Marriages Act [Chapter 5:07]. Prior to the ruling, the legal framework in Zimbabwe was fragmented when it came to child marriage. There were inconsistencies regarding marriage existing across the two recognised legal systems in the country.

Though the Constitution defines anyone below the age of 18 as a child, the Marriage Act [Chapter 5:11] had the minimum age of marriage set at 18 for boys and 16 for girls. Thus, this sanctioned child marriage for girls; additionally, boys and girls below the set ages could legally marry with judicial or parental consent (RAU, 2013). Customary marriage also had a loophole where child marriage is concerned as no specific minimum age was mentioned. This left room for people to make excuses to avoid being prosecuted in court (Makoni, 2016). These systems clearly failed to complement each other therefore “creating a fertile situation for the perpetuation of child marriages” as the flawed legal systems with their paradoxes and legal contradictions allowed child marriage to be practiced with impunity even though the country had ratified various regional instruments which declare child marriage illegal (Panos Institute Southern

Africa, 2015:13;Sibanda, 2011). In making the ruling, the court took this into consideration as Section 46(1)(c) of the Constitution requires courts to take into account any international laws, treaties and conventions ratified by Zimbabwe when interpreting any provision under Chapter 4 (Declaration of Human Rights) of the Constitution. During the case, “the Constitutional Court held that, by ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Children’s Charter, ‘Zimbabwe expressed its commitment to take all appropriate measures, including legislative, to protect and enforce the rights of the child as enshrined in the relevant conventions to ensure that they are enjoyed in practice’” (Nielsen & Hove, 2015: 561).

The next steps, now that child marriage has been outlawed, involve criminalising child marriage and bringing about law reformation to bring both customary and civil marriage law into compliance with the constitution. As it stands, the Marriage Act provisions which allow for child marriage remain on the statute book and these need to be repealed. The Customary Marriages Act also needs to be amended (Veritas, 2016). While a small group of parliamentarians and civil society pressure groups put together a draft Marriages Bill to amend the marriage laws in 2017, the bill still has not been enacted or even tabled in parliament as parliamentarians are said to still be ‘unpacking’ the bill and engaging with the women’s groups pushing for its enactment, in order to get a clear understanding of what it will mean for the nation (Chipunza, 2018).

3.5 Child marriage trends in Zimbabwe

As I began reviewing Zimbabwean literature on child marriage, I made use of the working definition of child brides as young women in a more or less stable union, often under civil, customary or religious law, with or without formal registration, before the age of 18. This definition aligned with Zimbabwean literature on the matter and also left room for me to explore the different forms that child marriage takes within Zimbabwe.

According to the 2014 Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), the national average for women aged 20 to 49 who had been married before the age of 18 was 32.8%, with rural areas and the poorest wealth quintiles holding the bulk of these women (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2016). These statistics, like all others, were collected from surveys that do not distinguish between the different forms of marriage in Zimbabwe but simply collect all marriage data based on a person’s self-proclamation of his or her marital status.

In the 20-24 age group, child marriage for women had increased from the 2009 percentage of 31% to 34% in 2014. The ratio of those girls between the ages of 15 and 19 who were married at the time was 1 in 4, which was also an increase from the 2009 finding of 21%. The proportion of these girls who lived in the rural areas was higher compared to those who lived in urban areas, namely, 29.2% and 13.9% respectively (ZIMSTAT, 2015). The Panos Institute Southern Africa (PSAf) (2015) notes that the reasoning often put forward regarding this difference is that the former (rural girls) have a higher level of exposure to the drivers of child marriage.

The provincial averages paint a dire picture with child marriage prevalence rates (based on the 20 to 49 age group) ranging from 48.9% in Mashonaland Central Province (which had the highest) to 15% in Bulawayo (an urban metropolitan province) which had the lowest prevalence. Similarly, Mashonaland Central (as a largely rural province) had the highest percentage of 15-19 year olds who were married or in a union at the time which was 39.1%, while again Bulawayo had the lowest percentage at 9.1% (ZIMSTAT, 2015). Within the report, socio-economic standing and levels of education were mentioned in passing as being among the factors which determine how likely individuals are to marry before 18 as compared to their peers. But there was no in depth analyses of the differences across provinces. Other reports published for example by ZIMSTAT and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) acknowledge these trends but also provide no concrete reasons for the disparities. Instead, general statements are once again made about the level of education and economic status having a role to play in the differences observed (PSAf, 2015). Additionally, whilst these statistical reports are generalised to the larger population and are useful in giving an idea of the scale of the problem, “it is important to acknowledge that existing large-scale surveys have failed to capture the complexities of the African marriage process” (Mawere & Mawere, 2010). This results in misleading information as these studies are unable to assess the prevalence of the possible various forms of child marriage unions.

Academic research on intra-country child marriage trends within Zimbabwe is close to non-existent and experts in the field seem unable to agree on the causes of the trends as identified above. For instance, Clever Ndanga of the Child Care Unit of the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ) attributes the high prevalence of child marriage in Mashonaland Central to poverty and low economic activity. Alternatively, human rights activist Simbarashe Namusi

states that the high prevalence is due to the large number of *Vapostori* religious sects in the region, as they are known to have doctrines which fuel child marriages (Masinire, 2015). In this respect, it is the case that high prevalence rates of child marriage are found amongst Apostolic sects particularly the Johanne Marange church; and that around twice as many women aged 20-24 years living in rural areas were likely to be married or in a union before the age of 18, compared to their urban counterparts (PSAf, 2015: 4). These discrepancies point towards the complex nature of child marriage, which is more often than not embedded in various socio-economic and political factors that exist simultaneously within specific environments.

Research conducted by the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) – a NGO in Zimbabwe – further highlights the significant knowledge gaps in academic literature on child marriage in Zimbabwe. The RAU’s findings indicate a lack of solid Zimbabwean-based evidence regarding for example community perceptions on child marriage, the consequences of child marriage and the effects of child marriage from the perspective of those who have experienced it (RAU, 2015).

3.6 Drivers of child marriage in Zimbabwe

According to a Media Brief published by the Panos Institute, there are five key drivers of child marriage in Zimbabwe. These are poverty; limited access to education; peer pressure; religious beliefs; and traditional and cultural practices. Of these five, only peer pressure does not appear on the list of key drivers of child marriage in Africa, as outlined earlier. Orphan-hood and family honour were also mentioned in the 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) as being drivers of child marriage and so I also discuss these here (ZIMSTAT, 2015). Although quite different from each other, at the core of some of these drivers are patriarchal discourses and attitudes that are often handed down within families through the socialisation process (Kambarami, 2016). As such, the issue of patriarchy is woven into a number of the discussions below.

3.6.1 Poverty

Poverty is often cited as the most significant driver of child marriage, not only in Zimbabwe but in other countries as well. This is supported by statistical data such as from UNFPA which found that “girls from the poorest 20 percent of the households in its Zimbabwe survey were more than

four times as likely to be married or in union before age 18 than girls from the richest 20 percent of the households” (cited in PSAf, 2015:5). Qualitative data supporting this position also exists, including from research carried out by the Research and Advocacy Unit which presented poverty as being behind many child marriages as parents need the bride price received from a daughter’s marriage to meet the family’s financial needs such as those arising from educating, housing, feeding and clothing the rest of the family (Sibanda, 2011). Marriage can also be a strategy to improve the family’s economic burden by having one less mouth to feed (Bhatasara, Chiweshe & Muparamoto, forthcoming).

However, findings collected during the 2014 MICS suggest that the significance of poverty when it comes to child marriage may actually be lower than expected and could also differ across age groups. Looking at female teenage marriage (15-19 years) in particular, the MICS findings show that contrary to the popular belief that female teenage marriage is largely driven by poverty, this practice is in fact significantly conditioned by “other socio-cultural and religious factors in addition to poverty; although the least deprived households in WQ5 [wealth quintile 5] have the lowest proportion of married female teenagers” (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2016: 25). This conclusion was based on the wealth quintile (WQ) data collected during the survey which showed that the values of female teenage marriage are relatively similar across the “first four wealth quintiles”, therefore leading the research team to posit that other factors come into play in addition to socio-economic deprivation (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2016: 6). Additionally, Matabeleland North, a rural province which they regarded as “the poorest province in terms of deprivation and poverty, had one of the lowest female teenage marriage rates”. They asserted that this could be the result of “cultural dynamics that do not necessarily ‘force’ female teenagers into marriage even if they fell pregnant” (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2016: 6). The lower teenage marriage rate, as recorded in the richest quintile, could then possibly show “how wealth quintile interacts with socioeconomic opportunities and [cultural] values that militate against teenage marriages” (UNICEF Zimbabwe 2016: 6).

Be that as it may, in looking at the older categories of women and the percentage of those who had been married before 18, the data showed that in the 20-24 age group in rural areas and within the poorest wealth quintiles, the proportion of women who were married before their 18th

birthday was higher than 40% (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2016). Hence, poverty is a factor but likely interacts with other drivers in complex ways under local conditions.

3.6.2 Education

As discussed earlier, significant research in Africa shows that the lack of education limits employment opportunities and other options which may otherwise be available to girls. This leaves them disempowered, with marriage possibly coming across as a viable option. The education system in Zimbabwe is made up of seven years (Grade One to Seven) of primary education and six years (Form One to Six) of secondary school which are split into two examinable phases (Matshalaga, 2004). Completion of the first phase of examinations in the fourth year of secondary school (Form Four) which are known as Ordinary Level Examinations, or ‘O’ Level in short, with five subject passes allows one to then enrol in vocational training. The completion of the second phase of examinations in the sixth year of secondary school (Form Six), which are known as Advanced Level Examinations, or ‘A’ Level in short is necessary for those wishing to continue into university.

Although Zimbabwe has an education policy that deems all primary school education as free since September 1980, in present-day Zimbabwe this policy seems to exist only on paper as financing education is an impossible task given the economic challenges faced by the country (Mapako & Mareva, 2013). Even where education is subsidised, parents also end up paying for this education in one way or another as they are at the very least expected to buy school uniforms, stationery and books along with paying the development fund levy and other incentives for teachers (Matshalaga, 2004; Mapako & Mareva, 2013).

The restricted access to education for girls is driven not only by the lack of money or the lack of access to a nearby, properly-resourced school, but also the existence of patriarchal attitudes that drive the preference for educating male children and place a higher burden of household chores on girls, which affects their performance in schools (PSAf, 2015; Hassan, 2014). All these factors may lead to early marriage particularly for girls in rural areas who are more likely to be burdened by these barriers to education (PSAf, 2015). In many rural areas, children have to walk long distances to get to school as no transport is available to take them to and from school; and where transport does exist, it is often too expensive (Matshalaga, 2004). Girls in Zimbabwe, like elsewhere, are also disproportionately affected by household chores because of the existence of

the gendered division of labour and the patriarchal bias towards educating boys over girls (Kambarami, 2006).

The 2014 MICS shows that “the probability of young women getting married early was lower when they had secondary and higher educational attainment” (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2016: 25). This data corresponded with evidence from a UNFPA survey which showed that limited (or a lack of access to) education is closely linked to higher rates of child marriage. Of the women who were surveyed in the 20-24 age group, “33% of the women with no education were married before 18 and 55% who had only their primary education were married before 18 compared to 23% of women who had secondary education or higher” (cited in PSAf, 2015:6). Many adolescent girls who do not attend school, it is claimed, are “likely to engage in sex, for various reasons such as the economic benefit, experimenting or just plain promiscuity” (Pazvakavambwa & Wanju, 2015: 11). These girls often end up pregnant which leads to their families marrying them off to the father of the child should he accept responsibility.

The data analysis from the MICS also “revealed gender disparities in education especially for primary and secondary education levels among adolescents age 15-19 years” (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2016: 9). Interestingly these disparities were in favour of females, with females in this age group having “better educational levels than their male counterparts in secondary education but less than males in primary education” (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2016: 9). This disparity could be an indication of girls who are more likely to be at risk of child marriage initially enrolling into primary school but failing to make it through to secondary school because of the various reasons listed as barriers to education earlier. Those who therefore move higher up the educational ladder, past primary school, could possibly be those at a lower level of risk and therefore able to rise up higher and generally perform better in schools.

3.6.3 Peer pressure

As argued by Panos Institute, peer pressure is one of the strong drivers of child marriage in Zimbabwe (2015). Girls and young women are said to sometimes put each other under pressure to marry early and start bearing children, as there is a myth that early child bearing is a cure for menstrual pains (Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014). There is also the supposed belief that early child bearing helps females to avoid complications associated with bearing children at an older

age, but this claim fails to mention the even greater complications associated with early child bearing (PSAf, 2015). Further, young girl's immaturity and peer pressure can lead to them insisting on getting married at a young age as they believe that they are old enough to enter into a marital union (RAU, 2015). This peer pressure can also be rooted in patriarchal attitudes whereby girls only become truly valuable and also respected once they are married. This supposed value is associated with the higher status received by wives, especially after they begin giving birth. According to Bhatasara, Chiweshe and Muparamoto, alongside the status accorded by motherhood, "being able to find a husband is also seen as a sign that they [young girls] have been raised well" which also earns their mothers more respect (forthcoming: 501). Peer pressure can therefore also be coupled with pressure from mothers.

3.6.4 Family honour

Family honour is very important in Zimbabwe and some parents go to extremes to retain this honour which has both cultural and religious value. Parents often allow early marriage for a number of reasons linked to family honour, including situations in which girls end up pregnant out of wedlock which brings considerable shame to the family (Sibanda, 2011; PSAf, 2015). Girls may be quickly married off by their parents once they have fallen pregnant as a form of 'damage control'. In some cases, it is even these girls who take it upon themselves to enter customary unions after they have fallen pregnant or become sexually active, as "they fear being rejected, beaten, or abused by relatives" (Human Rights Watch, 2015: par 8). This fear is not unfounded as it is common for a girl to be told to go back where she came from if she arrives home late, "especially when suspected to have been with a boy or man... in some cases regardless of whether she actually had sexual intercourse with him" (Pazvakavambwa & Wanju, 2015: 11). Both religion and cultural beliefs have a strong role to play here as they are linked to issues of morality and the value placed on virginity and marriage in Zimbabwe (Sibanda, 2011). At the core of these cultural beliefs are patriarchal attitudes that push for the control of women's sexuality through restricting its expression to marital unions only, while no such controls exist for their male counterparts. Because of these attitudes, in some cases, parents would rather marry their daughters at a young age than risk them engaging in premarital sex or losing their virginity through rape. Thus child marriage is "ill-conceived as a protective mechanism against premarital

sex, unplanned pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Infections” (Bhatasara, Chiweshe & Muparamoto, forthcoming: 503).

3.6.5 Religion

Religious beliefs amongst many Apostolic sects encourage girls to be married at a young age for various reasons, including protecting them from promiscuity and pregnancy out of wedlock. These religious beliefs are specifically embedded in patriarchal attitudes that allow for men to claim girls for marriage as soon as they reach puberty (Bhatasara, Chiweshe & Muparamoto, forthcoming). The Johanne Marange Apostolic Church (which is commonly known as *vapostori*) has gained considerable attention over the years due to the prevalence of child marriage within the church. With approximately 1.2 million members, this African-initiated church is said to be led by leaders who often use the Holy Spirit as “an intimidating tool, instilling fear in members not to do certain acts as they are threatened with curses” (Sibanda, 2011:5). As well, “[t]he same Holy Spirit is used to validate child marriages as the prophets would have been ‘directed’ by the Holy Spirit to marry young girls” (Sibanda, 2011: 5). During an interview with the Human Rights Watch in Zimbabwe, a midwife and member of the Johanne Masowe Shonhiwa Apostolic church stated that “church doctrine requires girls to marry between ages 12 and 16 to prevent sexual relations outside marriage” (2015: par 6). Additionally, girls should only have minimum schooling such that, when a girl enters into puberty, she is in a position as well to enter a marital union. Such circumstances are often disempowering and leave girls vulnerable to cross-generational marriages along with other harmful practices, which they do not question as they cannot stand up for themselves (Sibanda, 2011).

Although much attention is given to the Apostolic sects when it comes to child marriage, the 2014 MICS reveals that teenage marriage was actually higher amongst households where the head of the household regarded themselves as practicing traditional religion and those with no religion whatsoever. The prevalence rates sat at 34% for both traditional religion and no religion while, within the Apostolic sects, the prevalence rate was slightly less at 30% (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2016b).

3.6.6 Traditional and cultural beliefs

It is claimed that there are a number of traditional, cultural and customary beliefs and practices that drive child marriage in different parts of Zimbabwe. Accompanying the practice of *roora*, which is the most cited cultural practice leading to child marriage, are initiation rites, *chiramu*, *kuzvarira*, *chimutsa mapfiwa*, *bondwe*, *kuroodza* and *kuripa ngozi* (PSAf, 2015; Bhatasara, Chiweshe & Muparamoto, forthcoming). These seven practices have been highly contested in modern times and are intertwined with patriarchal attitudes that subordinate women and girls, and place men in a higher position where they control the lives of the ‘fairer’ sex. These patriarchal attitudes form a complex relationship with the categories mentioned directly below.

Traditional and cultural beliefs that drive child marriage seem to sit in three different categories. Whilst some of these practices are driven by poverty, others are driven by the now (mostly) eroded traditional ideals of marriage, kinship and family relations, and others are closely linked to traditional religious beliefs that are centred on ancestral worship and the connection between humans and the spirit world. That being the case, while all these practices are often spoken about as though they still occur in present-day Zimbabwe, most of them have been abandoned and are only rarely practiced. Those in the first category have been ruled illegal thus dissuading many from marrying off their daughters, most of those in the second category do not fit in with the family structure in present-day Zimbabwe, and those in the last category are hardly considered as most Zimbabweans no longer subscribe to the traditional spirit medium based religion. Where these practices still exist they are mostly practiced by those experiencing extreme droughts in remote areas of the country, or amongst those who still hold onto traditional religious and cultural beliefs and values embedded in ideas surrounding kinship and the connection to ancestors.

3.6.6.1 *Roora* (bride wealth)

In Zimbabwe, almost all civil and traditional marriages “were – and still are – expected to involve” the payment of *roora* (Chabata, 2012: 12; Mangena & Ndlovu, 2013; Mvududu *et al.*, 2002). The payment of *roora* was mostly in the form of a herd of cattle being moved from the son-in-law’s family’s herd to the herd of the bride’s family (Bourdillon, 1976). This was a type of contract between two families and, in its original form, this would allow for cattle to be

further circulated and used for bride wealth payment/s by the bride's brother/s (Bourdillon, 1993). The payment of *roora* thus “created a complex network of rights and obligations that persisted over generations” (Mvududu *et al.*, 2002:18). Along with the marriage also came the obligation of the groom to accommodate his wife's siblings by allowing them to live in his home should they need to, and to assist his in-laws' family to meet their day-to-day needs when they faced economic hardships (PSAf, 2015). As one Shona proverb says, “*mukwasha muonde haaperi kudyiwa*”, which means that a son-in-law is a fig tree you never finish/stop eating from. This promise of bride wealth was sometimes an incentive for marrying off girls in the traditional Shona society and as the payment of bride wealth moved towards cash payments instead of cattle, girls' vulnerability to early marriage increased, particularly for those from poor families or families which were struggling to meet their daily expenses.

The shift from the payment of *roora* in the form of cattle to payment in cash and consumer goods has for the most part shifted marriage from being a group effort involving entire families to being an individual process in which the groom is often expected to pay the entire amount on his own. At the same time, the bride's father is “likely to regard cash received from the bride price as personal property for his own use rather than family property for the marriages of his sons” (Bourdillon, 1987: 63).

From the perspective of Mvududu *et al.* (2002), and considering *roora* from a human rights framework, the practice of charging exorbitant amounts for personal gain in effect turns women into commodities which can be used for profit making purposes by charging high sums for their bride wealth. This is referred to as the commercialisation of *roora*. Indeed in reference to modern day Zimbabwe, it is argued that – over time – the practice has evolved from being a method of cultural identification and relationship building to a practice which exists simply to use women as ‘objects of commodification and profit-making’. The payment of *roora* now appears now to be a simple “business venture, where the bride has a clear monetary value attached to her”, which increases the possibility of girls being married off even at a young age for financial gain (Chabata, 2012: 11; Bourdillon, 1993; Mvududu *et al.*, 2002).

The commercialisation of bride wealth was evident from the early 1900s where the Chief Native Commissioner noted unreasonably high bridewealth charges with locals appearing “to be actuated by a spirit of profit in giving their daughters in marriage” (Jeater, 1993: 219). But this

commercialisation was for the most part a result of economic hardships and cash shortages which left the heads of families in dire situations. The cash payment of bride wealth was necessary as a source of income which could be used to meet the monetary demands of the emerging colonial state, including various taxes and rents as well as even dipping fees for owners of cattle (Jeater, 1993). This extraction of large amounts of money, often coming from the earnings of migrant workers in the early 1900s, can be viewed not as ‘tradition’ but as a source of power (Jeater, 1993). This power was held in the hands of potential fathers-in-law who set the requirements for bride wealth in the form of cash payments, and would not release their daughters for marriage otherwise.

As the late 1990s approached the face of this commercialisation changed and the bride’s monetary value became more of “compensation for the economic costs incurred in bringing up a daughter”, which not only includes the “cost of feeding and clothing her in an urban context, [as] there is also the considerable cost of the girl’s education” (1993: 37-38). This commercialisation of *roora* became further entrenched more recently due to changes which occurred at the time of the 2000 to 2008 economic crisis in Zimbabwe, with “the ensuing multi-currency era” seeing an acceleration of the commercialisation (Chabata, 2012: 12). Ultimately, “because of the monetary value attached to the bride, payment negotiations are characterised by intense bargaining leading to the payment of a high fee – and is almost equivalent to the selling of a commodity on the open market” (Chabata, 2012: 11). The increase in bride price acts as a strong incentive for marrying girls. Additionally, over the years there have been additions and revisions to what traditionally constituted bride wealth. The requirements for a standard *roora* now include:

- A list of grocery items.
- *Vhura muromo* which is paid for the negotiations to begin.
- *Matekenya ndebvu* which is a gift given specifically to the father for the father’s role in raising his daughter. This forms the main part of the father’s gifts and is also known as *mafidyongo/zvirevereve zvaababa* and is subject to negotiation.
- *Mafukidza dumbu* which is a gift specifically for the mother and the time she carried her daughter in the womb. It forms part of *mafidyongo/zvirevereve zvaamai*. These gifts to the mother are non-negotiable and can also include a fee called *mbereko* for the time she spent carrying the bride in a pouch as a child.

- *Musikana/tete* which is a gift for the bride and her younger sisters. This is a small allowance for ‘*Mari inonhongwa nemusihare*’ for the purchase of household or cooking utensils, and this amount is given to the bride. If there are younger sisters or siblings, she may give them a portion of the money. This money is for all the cooking that would have taken place for the party which is held after the bride wealth ceremony. Given that the groom is the one who finances this party, usually the bride returns the money (she would have received) to her future husband to cover other payments that follow.
- *Pfuma/Danga* which is the gift of cattle that includes a cow for the mother –*mombe youmai* – which needs to be a live cow while the others can be paid as a cash equivalent.
- *Majasi* is the last category that occurs after the groom is formally welcomed into the family and is given a list of clothes to buy for the mother and father and many other categories of relatives, depending on the family and its ethnic group (Mangena & Ndlovu, 2013).

Payments are often expected to be made all at once as this ensures the payment of the full bridewealth. This is considered important because, in ‘modern’ times, a man can easily relocate after getting his wife and the ensuing distance between families makes it difficult to follow up on payments. For this reason, sometimes couples who want to hold a church wedding or register their marriage are prohibited from doing so as “a weapon in the father’s arsenal to ensure his full payment of bridewealth” (Jeater, 1993: 107). These changes in bride wealth increase the possibility of parents marrying their children at a younger age as there is the promise of wealth. Should parents be in a bad financial position, marriage then seems like a solution to their troubles.

3.6.6.2 Initiation rites

Some communities such as the Shangaan in Chiredzi and the Xhosa in Mbembesi are said to conduct initiation rites which contribute to child marriage as, at these rites, considerable emphasis is placed on “sex in the definition of manhood and womanhood” (PSAf, 2015: 7). A 2011 Plan Zimbabwe survey mentioned in a media brief concluded that school attendance drops for many children after they have attended these rites and, of those who do continue to attend

school, the value placed on education seems to decrease (PSAf, 2015). A report published by the Zimbabwe Youth Council also supports this (Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014).

3.6.6.3 Chiramu

Chiramu is a practice which bestows a collection of certain privileges on a girl's maternal uncles and brothers-in-law (Kanchense, 2007). The uncle or brother-in-law is "allowed to refer to his wife's young sisters or female cousins and nieces as his wives" (PSAf, 2015: 7). This practice often includes role playing with these 'wives'. The reason behind this practice and the type of role playing allowed tends to vary across literature, with some publications saying that the practice of *chiramu* was "seen as a way to make the females to feel welcome at their female relative's home" (PSAf, 2015: 7). This would occur through the uncle or brother-in-law jokingly calling the girl 'wife' and speaking of how she owns "everything in the house including the property, himself and the children" (PSAf,2015: 7). Others present a more sinister view of the practice, looking at it as a practice in which an uncle or brother-in-law can fondle or engage in sexual activity with his wife's unmarried nieces or his young unmarried sister-in-law (Mashiri, 2013; Muronda, 2006; Kanchense, 2007). This type of behaviour was said to be a way of teaching girls "how a man proposes and how to avoid him. The girl would also learn how to look after a husband, as she would be doing it for the brother-in-law" (Muronda, 2006: 146).

Despite the different ways *chiramu* is presented in various literature, there is a general agreement that this practice has led to the abuse of many girls as men have used this practice as an excuse for having "both forced and consensual sexual relations with their wives' young female relatives" (PSAf, 2015: 7). When this happens, some of these men offer to marry the girl and – in some parts of the country – the in-laws agree because traditionally, the girl "is his wife" (PSAf, 2015:7). Results from a qualitative study conducted by the Research and Advocacy Unit (2015) support this claim as a number of their respondents mentioned instances in which their younger sisters were raped by their husbands. These husbands then claimed the two were having an ongoing affair and offered to pay *roora* so that the sister could officially become a second wife. Despite the various ways in which *chiramu* presents itself, it is clear that this sort of behaviour (which was traditionally centred on relationship building) has been abused in modern day society not only by men who impose themselves on young women but also by young women themselves who may see involvement with the man as a gateway to a better life for example. Stories can be

found all over media and social media of modern day cases of *chiramu* (*Sunday Mail*, 2014, October 12; Nzenza, 2016; Mpofo, 2018).

3.6.6.4 Kuzvarira/Kuputsira (pledged marriage)

Kuzvarira is a practice of betrothment which can be considered as a form of marrying “in advance” whereby an infant is pledged in marriage to an older, usually richer man, from as early as birth. This is often done by poor families in exchange for food or livestock (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2013). The term *kuzvarira* means “to be born for someone” and this is sometimes used interchangeably with *kuputsira* which means to ‘break or throw away a child’ (Andfansi, 1970: 28; Holleman, 1969). This ‘breaking’ could refer to the breaking of the girl’s heart who was given away or the relation that breaks if the girl runs away to the partner of her own choice, with the latter resulting in the family (which the girl had been married into) claiming its money back (Vijfhuizen, 2002).

This type of marriage is sometimes seen as the equivalent of barter trade. A poor family, especially in times of starvation, would negotiate with a wealthy and often older man to exchange a young girl for marriage in return for grain or cows. Given such men were often old, they would either be married already or be widowed and the transaction would serve to acquire them another wife or to replace the dead one. Food would be given to the girl’s family to avoid starvation but she would continue to live with her parents until she reached an age where she can be married, usually the onset of puberty (Vijfhuizen, 2002). The man would then pay a discounted bride price, but sometimes he would opt to take care of the girl himself until she reached the onset of puberty (Chitakure, 2016). Further, the girl could be given to a son or nephew if it was the case that the father of that specific family was too old (Vijfhuizen, 2002).

This practice is considered as a form of forced marriage and is now forbidden by the law. Whilst it was considered extinct at some point, cases of *kuzvarira* do emerge today in times of hardship in some rural communities and in some Apostolic sects. Such cases are often picked up by the local media and differ from the traditional forms of *kuzvarira* in that the child is not pledged before birth but an existing child is used. One such case was that of an elderly couple who married off their granddaughter in 2014 in exchange for R564 and a bag of mealie meal from a herd boy (Dube, 2014). Previously, in 1992, the practice re-emerged in Chipinge district due to

severe droughts (Vijfhuizen, 2002). While Holleman (1969) refers to this as a credit marriage, Bourdillon refers to it directly as child marriage (1987: 44).

3.6.6.5 *Chimutsa mapfiwa*

Chimutsa mapfiwa literally translates to “keeping the fire burning” (Vijfhuizen, 2002). This practice involves a family offering a female relative as a second wife to “help bear children” for husbands of older aunts or sisters who have been failing to conceive within their marriage (PSAf, 2015: 8; Chinyoka & Naidu, 2013). These relatives are often in the form of nieces or younger sisters and in some cases the first wife herself extends an invitation to the girl for her to become a part of a polygamous union in an attempt to preserve the marriage from external women (Chinyoka, 2011 cited in Bhatasara, Chiweshe & Muparamoto, forthcoming).

The practice of giving a female relative to an aunt or sister’s husband could also occur after the death of a wife, whereby the widower is given a replacement wife by his in-laws. This replacement wife is usually his dead wife’s younger sister, cousin or niece who will then ensure that the husband and children continue to be taken care of. In some cases, this could actually be the wish of the deceased wife herself – that her family, particularly the children, are taken care of by a relative or sister and not another of the husband’s wives (Holleman, 1969). Whilst literature generally refers to this as *chimutsa mapfiwa* as well, Chinyoka (2011) refers to this practice as *bondwe*.

No additional bride price would be paid in either of these cases as marriage and the transfer of both sexual and reproductive rights and obligations occurred between families and not individuals. In the case of a woman failing to conceive, her family thus offered another wife as compensation so the reproductive rights and obligations could be met and, in the case of a deceased wife, the replacement wife ensured the rights and obligations continued to be met as these outlived the individual.

3.6.6.6 *Kuripa ngozi* (appeasement marriage)

The term *ngozi* refers to an avenging spirit. This spirit is “normally a ‘good’ spirit, [which] turns ‘bad’ when it feels it has been wronged, and thereafter becomes angry, bitter and vengeful” (Lessem, 1996). The term *ngozi* is usually used to refer to the spirit of someone who has been

murdered. According to African traditional religion, it is believed that this spirit returns to cause illness and various other misfortunes to the murderer and his family (Vijfhuizen, 2002; Hanzi, 2006). In order to stop these misfortunes, it is required that the spirit of the deceased be appeased by the perpetrator's family, even if the perpetrator has since passed away. *Kuripa ngozi* then is when a virgin girl is offered in marriage to appease the spirit of the deceased. The girl is used to atone for the murder. In other cases where the wrongdoing was not in the form of a murder, this appeasement marriage can still be used to make peace between families by settling long-standing disputes between them (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2013). Cattle often accompany the 'gift' of the girl for the atonement.

In most cases where a girl is given to atone for a murder, she is "usually given to the victim's male relative so that she can bear a child to replace the victim", ultimately fulfilling the angry spirit's wish therefore preventing illness and misfortune (PSAf, 2015: 8; Vijfhuizen, 2002). This type of marriage is now rarely practiced given that many families have abandoned these traditional religious beliefs; additionally, it is forbidden by the law. However, *kuripa ngozi* still occurred in the early 2000s in some areas such as Manesa village (Vijfhuizen, 2002). Other cases have been identified in previous years as well, such as the five girls pledged in marriage from 1999 onwards to appease the spirits after a man was murdered and in 2018 there was a request for a virgin made by the family of a man who was murdered many years before (Kachere, 2009; Muchetu, 2018). In 2006, some chiefs signed a pledge to end this practice and instead agreed to offer livestock to the spirits, which is now also done by many other people across the country (Sithole, 2016).

3.6.6.7 Kuroodza

Kuroodza is a custom "whereby a family in need typically receives help from another family, on the condition that the family receiving assistance commits to giving a girl child, or bearing a girl child, and giving it to the donor family. In this practice, a girl up to about age 19 years is provided in a form of debt bondage" (Kanchense, 2007: 378). This practice is closely linked to the practice of *kuzvarira* or pledge marriage.

3.6.7 Orphan-hood

While studies conducted in the wider sub-Saharan Africa region show no link between family structure (particularly orphan-hood) and the likelihood of one entering into child marriage, research in Zimbabwe indicates otherwise (Plermo & Peterman, 2009).

There was a time in Zimbabwe where the term ‘orphan’ did not exist as extended family members quickly stepped in to look after children who had lost their parents (Zagheni, 2011). Before the HIV and AIDS pandemic that swept through Zimbabwe creating an orphan crisis, the role of orphan care was often taken on by extended family members. The scourge of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe has led to an orphan crisis in the country, with most of the care of these orphans falling on grandparents who receive “little or no support from the surviving members of the extended family or other sections of society” (Matshalaga, 2004: iii).

When looking at orphan-hood, the terms single or double orphans are often used to refer to a child who has lost either one of both parents, respectively. According to Abigail Damasane, the Deputy Minister of Women’s Affairs in 2017, children from child headed households including orphaned children are at a higher risk of child marriage because of a number of factors including poverty, the lack of financial independence and limited access to education(cited in Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2017). Child marriage then comes across as an escape from poverty and a means of survival. Paying close attention to orphans could therefore be an important part of addressing and ending child marriage as the 2015 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) revealed that 16% of children in Zimbabwe have lost one or both parents, with children in rural areas being more likely to be orphans than those from urban areas (ZIMSTAT & ICF International, 2016).

Research has shown that orphans who find themselves in the care of distant relatives in particular often find themselves being treated as sources of cheap labour or domestic work, with some orphans even being forced to stay home from school doing domestic work. This abuse of children and the limited access to education both put children at risk for child marriage (Matshalaga, 2004; Tag A Life International, 2016). Being an orphan also affects the possibility of getting an education as a birth certificate is needed to register for school. Orphans who have no birth documentation are therefore at a disadvantage, this often occurs in cases where the parents died before getting birth certificates (Matshalaga, 2004).

3.7 Experiences of child marriage in Zimbabwe

After reviewing a number of research studies (Hodzi, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2015; RAU, 2015; PSAf, 2015; Koski, 2016) on child marriage in Zimbabwe, it became apparent that for the most part, the experience of child marriage is a negative and violent one in which girls have limited agency and suffer abuse in various forms. This abuse, which can be physical, emotional, sexual or financial may occur not only at the hands of the husband but his relatives as well – particularly his sisters (*anate*) and his mother. Child brides also suffer emotionally as they are unable to find their place in society as they fail to identify with and fit into the two groups at their disposal, one of married or unmarried adults and the other of their unmarried peers (PSAf, 2015). It therefore came as no surprise that, in one research study where 35 women and girls who had been or were still child brides were interviewed, “many described mental distress and suicidal feelings as a result of their situation” (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

This section provides only a brief overview of the experiences of child marriage, in part because the Zimbabwean literature on child bride experiences is limited in terms of its depth and secondly the ensuing empirical chapters of the thesis provide a deeper and more vivid understanding of these experiences.

3.7.1 Physical and sexual abuse

Child brides are sometimes beaten by their husbands who may also engage in marital rape. This rape can even include family members who hold down the girl while the husband engages in sex with his ‘wife’ for the first time. These occurrences leave girls feeling damaged and worthless (Hodzi, 2014; Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Physical abuse in cases of child marriage can also be linked to child labour where child brides are made to work excessively, more “like slaves” doing all household chores and taking care of a large family (RAU, 2015; Kurebwa & Kurebwa, 2018). In-laws, co-wives and other relatives can also play a role in physical abuse, particularly when they feel the girl is not taking good care of her husband and the family (Hodzi, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2015; Zimbabwe Youth Council, 2014). Additionally, co-wives can be driven to physical abuse by jealousy and resentment.

3.7.2 Emotional and verbal abuse

Many child brides find themselves isolated from their families and friends as they are left living in the husband's home or with the in-laws, sometimes in a new area altogether. This isolation and lack of companionship can be viewed as a form of emotional abuse, albeit an indirect one. Husbands and in-laws in some cases also say hurtful things and damage the girls' self-esteem (RAU, 2015).

In cases where the age gap between the girl and her husband is quite significant, it is no surprise that these girls soon realise that they are trapped in loveless marriages in which their husband does not satisfy them emotionally and sexually as well. This sometimes leads to extramarital affairs by the young wives, particularly in the cases of polygamous marriage where the husband has to split his attention (Hodzi, 2014; RAU, 2015). These experiences also have a negative effect on girls' emotional and mental health as they are likely to lead to depression, feelings of hopelessness and anxiety (Kurebwa & Kurebwa, 2018).

3.7.3 Financial abuse

Child brides are sometimes economically neglected; this is a problem as they are often fully dependent upon the husband in terms of financial provisions (RAU, 2015). This dependence sometimes comes about not because the girls have no skills which they can use to secure an income, but because they are not allowed to work and make their own money. If these girls end up abandoned by their husbands, left with children to care for, they find themselves in a hopeless situation as they have no savings set aside and a limited earning capacity (Human Rights Watch, 2015). This is quite unfortunate, as research conducted by the RAU (2015) shows that when child brides have a form of income or when their husbands are gainfully employed, it is possible for them to have a comfortable and somewhat happy life.

3.8 Consequences of child marriage in Zimbabwe

Whilst the continuing scourge of child marriage is a topical issue within the country, studies carried out tend to focus mostly on the drivers of child marriage. Studies which also include a review of the consequences and experiences do so quite briefly and, in most cases, these studies

are those by Honours students around the country, thus churning out a limited amount of data by virtue of the research projects being small in nature. Despite the limited amount of data on the consequences of child marriage, it is evident that the consequences within Zimbabwe are found on various levels and mirror those found across Africa (discussed in Chapter 2). For this reason, the discussion here is kept brief, leaving out issues of abuse and economic opportunities as this would come across as duplication. I focus here on three categories which include additional information which is specific to the Zimbabwean case. The increase in exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV are present in the Zimbabwe literature, but not specifically addressed in literature looking at Africa.

3.8.1 Early child bearing

In Zimbabwe, bearing children is an important part of marriage and once one is married it may be expected that children start being born soon thereafter. The pressure to have children leads to young brides falling pregnant before they are mature enough to handle raising their own child, both physically and emotionally (Bhatasara, Chiweshe & Muparamoto, forthcoming). These pregnancies also carry a high risk of complications that negatively affect girls' health such as obstetric fistula. In worst case scenarios, these complications actually lead to death during the course of the pregnancy or during child birth. It is also often the case that children born to young girls are born with a low birth weight and also later face developmental challenges (PSAf, 2015; Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2017; Kurebwa & Kurebwa, 2018)

3.8.2 Education

Child marriage can lead to girls dropping out of school therefore stripping them of the opportunity to learn and gain access to various economic opportunities. This occurs for various reasons including financial hardship, familial responsibilities such as looking after a baby, or simply because the husband refuses to allow his wife to continue attending school (Human Rights Watch, 2015). As a result of their limited education, child brides who drop out of school are left dependent on their husbands and his family, which further exposes them to physical abuse. Not only are they unable to provide for themselves, they are also unable to contribute meaningfully to the family income and to taking care of the children (PSAf, 2015). If the marriage were to end, which often is the case, these girls and their children end up at risk of

being trapped in a cycle of poverty (Human Rights Watch, 2015). This is disheartening especially in cases where girls watch their unmarried peers' progress with their education and move on to become financially independent.

The issue of limited education is particularly true for girls married within the Apostolic sect as educating girl children is generally frowned upon and in some cases is out-rightly forbidden after a girl is married (Hodzi, 2014). As a Johwane Marange Apostolic church elder from Masvingo said, “[f]ormal education is not important because the church will teach her the necessary skills to work with her hands and provide for her family. Skills like weaving baskets and mats to sell.” (cited in Human Rights Watch, 2015: par 13).

3.8.3 Increased exposure to STIs and HIV

Girls are often unable to negotiate for safe sex with their husbands, even in cases where they are aware that their husband is engaged in extra-marital affairs. This can be because of a lack of education regarding sexual and reproductive health issues or because of fear and a large age difference that keeps the girls submissive (Hodzi, 2014). Girls are therefore at a greater risk of contracting STIs or HIV once they are married, particularly if they are in a polygamous marriage in which one or more of the partners is involved in an extra-marital affair.

3.9 Child marriage interventions

The global fight against child marriage is spearheaded by a global partnership called Girls Not Brides. Girls Not Brides was founded in 2011 and was the first ever global network created to bring together organisations and institutions working towards ending child marriage and empowering girls to fulfil their potential. The network was founded by The Elders, “a group of independent global actors and leaders” brought together by Nelson Mandela “to promote peace and address issues of human suffering” (Giaquinta, 2016: 6). According to Hodgkinson, child marriage made it onto their agenda after they “sought to address gender inequality and tackle the effect of religion and tradition in justifying gender discrimination” (2016:8). In 2013, Girls Not Brides became an independent charity and is now established in the international development community as “a knowledge hub and a main advocate against child marriage” (The Elders, cited in Giaquinta, 2016: 6).

As of 2019 Girls Not Brides has more than 1,100 partners in 100 countries, with Zimbabwe being one of them (Girls Not Brides, 2019). The network has a vast membership with various partners tackling child marriage from different angles such as issues related to health, education, girls' empowerment, poverty, human rights and girls' safety (Girls Not Brides, 2019).

In Zimbabwe, civil society organisations and government bodies often drive various activities either unilaterally or in cohorts. Even before the Constitutional Court ruling against child marriage was passed, Zimbabwe had a significant number of interventions across various levels and sectors, with many stakeholders being part of Girls Not Brides. In Zimbabwe, the network has at least 30 organisations, with three (Plan Zimbabwe, Katswe Sistahood and Real Opportunities for Transformation Support (ROOTS)) in particular having launched interventions that are listed on the network's website. This is not to say other organisations do not have any interventions but, for most, child marriage is included as one of many intervention areas or even as an output area under a major theme such as girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Other mainstream organisations known to be working on the issue of child marriage in Zimbabwe include the Musasa Project, Tag a Life International (TaLI), ChildLine Zimbabwe and various UN agencies. These organisations often partner with government bodies which are also engaging with the issue of child marriage in various ways. In this section, I discuss only a few of the interventions below to provide some insight on the context in which child marriage exists in Zimbabwe.

As stated in the previous chapter, successful interventions are often centred on empowering girls, mobilising stakeholders, economic support and incentives, and a change in laws and policies. All these areas are accounted for by interventions in Zimbabwe, with most programmes taking on a cross-sectional approach. I try and include examples of interventions for each category but, given the poor recording and publicisation of interventions, some sections hold less information than others. My desk research on these interventions had to be supplemented by interviews with organisational representatives for me to gain a clearer understanding of these interventions and how they are rolled out. I include data gathered on government interventions from those interviews (Musasa, ChildLine, and Department of Social Welfare) here and not in my empirical chapters so as to present a more consolidated review of the interventions.

3.9.1 Laws and policies

At a regional level, Zimbabwe has ratified and is party to a number of conventions that call for the protection of children from abuse and an end to child marriage. Most of these have already been discussed in the previous chapter. These include the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriages, and the SADC Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protection of Children Already in Marriage which was adopted by the SADC Parliamentary Forum Plenary Assembly on 4 June 2016. Whilst all this has been done, Zimbabwe does not have much to show in terms of tangible outcomes as far as changing laws and policies that allow for the continued practice of child marriage is concerned.

3.9.1.1 The African Union campaign to end child marriage

In August 2015, Zimbabwe launched the African Union campaign “to accelerate the end of child marriage” and invited traditional leaders to be involved in it (AU, 2014). The AU Campaign to End Child Marriage was a two-year campaign focusing on advocacy, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the facilitation of technical assistance and capacity building (AU, 2014). Zimbabwean Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda was appointed as the African Union Goodwill Ambassador for Ending Child Marriage, thus ensuring that there is a focal and inspirational figure as far as ending child marriage is concerned (Plan International Zimbabwe, 2016).

3.9.1.2 Zimbabwean constitution

Zimbabwe adopted a new constitution in 2013 which is more sensitive to human rights, particularly those of women and children (Plan International Zimbabwe, 2016). Although the constitution clearly speaks out against child marriage, the marriage acts in Zimbabwe contained provisions that allowed for child marriage to persist in the country, such as the lack of a clearly stated minimum age for marriage within customary law and a provision allowing under aged children (below 18) to marry with parental or judicial consent. The 2016 Constitutional Court judgement which ruled these marriage acts (which allowed for child marriage) unconstitutional was a necessary and significant step towards legislative reform in relation to marriage laws. While Zimbabwe is still debating the adoption of the Model Law provisions as a tool for legal reform, a National Action Plan (NAP) and Communication Strategy on Ending Child Marriage

was developed as a result of the constitutional court ruling (Plan International Zimbabwe, 2016). This NAP was launched by First Lady Auxilia Mnangagwa alongside the Ministry of Women Affairs in December 2018 (*The Herald*, 2018, December 20). According to the First Lady, the NAP will help in accelerating progress towards ending child marriage as it will aid in the creation of structures that will align Zimbabwe's legislation with the constitution; build meaningful partnerships with religious groups and traditional community-based organisations; "strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms"; and "effectively coordinate, monitor and evaluate all initiatives against child marriages... [and] provide for enhanced advocacy for child-led initiatives" (cited in *The Herald*, 2018, December 20).

3.9.1.3 Anti child marriage pledge

Soon after the criminalisation of child marriage, the members of parliament signed a pledge to protect the girl child and this was followed by the submission of a marriage bill to the Minister for Justice by a private group of parliamentarians and civil society organisation (CSOs) pressure groups (Chuma, 2007). To add onto the information contained in the bill, public hearings were conducted by Parliamentary Committees seeking to gain further insight on the causes and extent of child marriage, along with soliciting policy proposals that can feed into the tabling of the corrective marriage legislation.

3.9.2 Mobilising stakeholders

Various parties such as CSOs, NGOs and other government bodies have been involved in mobilising stakeholders in the fight against child marriage. These stakeholders include men and boys, traditional and religious leaders, schools and various government entities. It has been acknowledged that all parts of society need to be involved for meaningful change to occur. Activities such as community dialogues and awareness raising campaigns are used to engage with these stakeholders. Most programmes tend to use this approach as one of many other activities as shown below in Section 3.9.4.

3.9.2.1 Mobilising traditional leaders and communities

Research carried out amongst traditional leaders (the Chief's Council) by Chiweshe (forthcoming) found that chiefs were interested in playing a part in bringing child marriage to an

end and had in fact, in some instances, started initiatives which attempted to address the issue of child marriage in their jurisdiction. Such initiatives include community dialogues to raise awareness and thus sensitise the community on child marriage, and a school attendance monitoring programme to quickly identify and follow up on girls who become absent from school.

3.9.2.2 Mobilising religious leaders and communities

The Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ) is a church body that governs over 700 churches which have a following of about 7.3 million people and 4 million children (ACCZ Child Care Unit, 2015). To show their commitment towards child protection, the ACCZ set up a Gender and Child Care Unit to create “an enabling environment that champions the development of women, children and youths” (cited in Saunyama, 2016: par. 3). The unit set up an anti-child marriage and gender based violence campaign as one of the activities in line with fostering child development. The campaign, which is run under the theme “Zero Tolerance to Child Marriage”, was deemed as critical given the high rate of child marriage and the exploitation of women in many Apostolic sects. This campaign focuses on sensitising religious leaders about the negative impacts of child marriage and also encourages leaders and church members to look out for cases of child marriage amongst the Apostolic churches, as well as playing a role in apprehending those practicing child marriage (Human Rights Watch, 2015). The council also hands out educational material on child marriage, and trains club leaders who run activities on SRHR and child marriage within various churches. Additionally, it has events on ending gender based violence where young people and women from across the country are invited to learn about issues related to ending child marriage and gender based violence (Saunyama, 2016).

3.9.3 Empowering girls and economic support and incentives

Education is considered a basic right in Zimbabwe. Various school funding programmes exist in Zimbabwe amongst at risk girls, with the effect of these programmes being praised. A three year programme rolled out amongst orphaned girls in the country showed that keeping girls in school by providing incentives such as the payment of school fees and provision of school uniform, books and other supplies was effective in decreasing the proportion of girls who ended up

turning to marriage before their 18th birthday (Hallfors *et al*, 2015). Programmes that focus on education centred interventions are not run in isolation but are part of multi-sectoral approaches that also include economic support and other incentives. The programmes are therefore discussed in more detail in the following section

3.9.4 Programmes with a multi-sectoral approach

Given the complexity of child marriage brought about by the way various factors which interact to drive this practice, programmes which include child marriage interventions often tackle this issue from various angles. It is also often the case that child marriage interventions are actually embedded in larger programmes that focus on child protection or SRHR in general for example. This makes it almost impossible to clearly pinpoint child marriage interventions if one is not aware of the specific outcomes or deliverables expected under specific programmes. My interviews with representatives from local organisations and government bodies played a key role in directing me towards relevant interventions as they guided me towards the DREAMS partnership (see below) and various government interventions that include the reduction of child marriage as a key outcome.

3.9.4.1 Plan International 18+ Campaign

Plan International is a development and humanitarian organisation with a presence in at least 76 countries across the globe. The organisation works on advancing children’s rights and equality for girls (Plan International, 2018). One of the ways in which they do this is by working towards eradicating child marriage which is targeted as part of their sexual health programmes.

The 18+ campaign is a regional programme aiming to end child marriage in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The project was launched by Plan International Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development in July 2015. The main objectives of the campaign are: “(i) to mobilise girls at risk of child marriage so that they have the capabilities to determine their own futures and make their own choices about if, when and whom they marry;(ii) to transform, through social movement-building, the gender norms and practices that drive child marriage and;(iii) to facilitate an enabling legal and policy environment to protect girls from child marriage.” (Plan International Zimbabwe, 2016: 2).

The campaign's interventions cut across three different levels, the national, community, and individual levels. At the national level lies policy advocacy work and the engagement with religious and traditional leaders who are mobilised to join the fight against child marriage, at the community level community leaders are also mobilised, and at the individual level school children are targeted in awareness and sensitivity campaigns (RAU, 2014).

3.9.4.2 Katswe Sistahood's "Give Us Books Not Husbands" campaign

Katswe Sistahood is a women's movement working on SRHR issues that affect women across Africa. As it is well known that child marriage often has negative effects on girls' SRHR, Katswe Sistahood started a nationwide campaign to end child marriage. Their campaign focuses on engagement on various levels including engagements with community members, particularly traditional and religious leaders, and engagements with parents, adolescents and also survivors of child marriage. The engagement with former child brides includes supporting them by providing safe spaces where they can share their experiences and discuss possible areas of transformation, and also linking girls to opportunities for economic empowerment. Engagement with all other stakeholders includes awareness and sensitisation on the issue of child marriage, and the role these stakeholders can play in bringing child marriage to an end (Katswe Sistahood, 2018; *The Zimbabwean*, 2014, August 26).

3.9.4.3 ROOTS: "Not Ripe for Marriage" campaign

ROOTS is a non-profit organisation working mostly "at the grassroots level to promote economic and social justice among young people in peri-urban, rural and mining communities" (ROOTS, 2019: par 1). In November 2014, the organisation launched a six-month campaign to end child marriage in Zimbabwe. The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness of the negative effects of forced, child and early marriage as well as to raise funds to build an economic base for girls and young women and to advocate for policy and legislative change around the issue of child marriage. The campaign was rolled out with the support of several government bodies, local NGOs, private sector organisations and religious bodies. Campaign activities included social media campaigns, community dialogues, awareness raising and the research and documentation of cases. Although most campaign activities were at the grassroots level, targeting a change in behaviours and attitudes, ROOTS was also involved in advocacy at the local and national level and is in fact one of the two organisations that later supported the two young women who took the government of Zimbabwe to court and won

the Constitutional Court hearing against child marriage (ROOTS, 2019). To date, ROOTS still engages in activities targeted towards ending child marriage.

3.9.4.4 Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe women (DREAMS) partnership

DREAMS is an ambitious two-year partnership that was set up in 2015 in response to statistics that showed that “girls and young women account for 74 percent of new HIV infections among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa” (PEPFAR, n.d: par.2). The partnership, which was supported by the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Girl Effect, Johnson & Johnson, Gilead Sciences, and ViiV Healthcare, sought to implement a public-private partnership “to help girls develop into Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe women” (PEPFAR, n.d: par. 1). With the aim of reducing HIV among young women and girls, ten countries were selected in sub-Saharan African. These ten countries, Zimbabwe included, were selected because together they accounted for “more than half of all the new HIV infections that occurred among adolescent girls and young women globally in 2015” (PEPFAR, n.d: par. 3).

In each country, the DREAMS partnership (which has now been extended to a second phase of funding) is made up of organisations specialising in different areas that feed into the aim to reduce HIV infections. In Zimbabwe, DREAMS was initially implemented by 10 primary partners in 6 districts. These partners played various roles in meeting the DREAMS’ objectives, which sometimes involved them also giving out sub-grants to other local partners so they can meet their key deliverables. Although grants and sub-grants were not specific to child marriage, the DREAMS focus on HIV and new infections was linked to the issue of child marriage, thus addressing this issue as part of the package as far as result areas were concerned.

Together, partners in Zimbabwe worked on providing adolescent girls with a core package of services which included HIV counselling and testing; family planning services; community mobilisation and norm change to decrease the rate of new infections; strengthening families of highly vulnerable girls through cash transfers, educational subsidies, and parent/caregiver training; and school based HIV and violence prevention programmes (PEPFAR, n.d:1; *The Herald*, 2017, June 13). The idea was to have all these services available to selected communities.

The Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS), Vana Bantwana and Population Services Zimbabwe (PSI/Z) were three of the main implementing partners and I mention them here as their names came up during unofficial interviews with various non-governmental organisations.

SAfAIDS is an organisation working on promoting “effective and ethical development responses to SRH [sexual and reproductive health], HIV and TB integrated with livelihood strategies” through advocacy, social mobilisation and communication (SAfAIDS, 2019: par. 1). Their work on child marriage is in the form of awareness raising and sensitisation on the issue. This is embedded in their girls’ clubs for in-school and out-of-school adolescents aged 15 to 24. The girls are given information, and encouraged and empowered to make healthy choices. Child marriage is not targeted directly but is covered as a component of SRHR. Vulnerable youths are targeted especially on farms where girls usually find themselves with two options, either to also work on farms as their parents do or to enter into marriage (SAfAIDS, 2019).

Marie Stopes is an organisation that provides contraceptive and abortion services and works in Zimbabwe under the name PSZ. PSZ provides SRH services such as family planning and information around SRH. Girls who find themselves married before the age of 18 are able to take control of their reproductive health by accessing various forms of contraception from this organisation.

Vana Bantwana is a World Education Inc. initiative which works on addressing issues related to childcare, HIV and poverty. Vana Bantwana has carried out various activities such as a school-community programme to identify and support girls at risk of dropping out of school; vocational skills training; technical assistance to the Department of Social Welfare for the reporting of and quick response to child protection cases in the community; youth readiness training; financial literacy; education support through subsidies; sexual and reproductive education; entrepreneurship, mentoring, and life and employability skills; and training of community volunteers and the provision of gender based violence prevention programmes (Bantwana, 2019).

3.9.4.5 Government interventions

The Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare considers child marriage a key area of intervention and, as such, child marriage has been a key result area since 2014. The department, along with several partners, has been responsible for rolling out tailor made programmes in all districts. These programmes are not specifically geared towards child marriage but contain child marriage as one of the target areas. Programmes include but are not limited to the National Case Management System which was set up to improve the response to children's welfare and protection needs; funding of education; specialised training to volunteers tasked with awareness raising and education of community members; production of communication materials; and the establishment of child protection committees. The reporting of cases of child marriage, which is guided by the case management system, in some cases has increased because of volunteers having been provided with cellphones to aid in the reporting. As well, the government created partnerships with various organisations to assist in responding to reported cases in terms of providing technical and financial support which allows social workers to follow up on reports.

Most schools in Zimbabwe are owned and run by local authorities through the Ministry of Local Government, National Housing and Public Works. The government, through this ministry plays a role in improving access to education for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). This is carried out through funding for OVC's education from the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) under the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Zimbabwe (NAP-OVC) (National Association of NGOs, Institute of Development Studies & Progressio-Zimbabwe, 2012).

An unconditional social cash transfer programme, named the Harmonised Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) programme, has also been used by the government to strengthen household economies for extremely poor labour-constrained families who are unable to benefit from income-generating activities for various reasons. The programme was set up as "a response to chronic food insecurity and deep poverty in rural Zimbabwe" and is implemented as one of the interventions under the NAP-OVC, as it is explicitly focused on addressing the needs of OVC (therefore dealing with the issue of poverty which plays a part in child vulnerability) (Carolina

Population Centre, 2018: ii). The programme is referred to as ‘harmonised’ because it includes a set of various child protection interventions for each household such as promoting access to education and basic services.

3.10 Challenges in ending child marriage

As noted in a policy brief published by the Parliament of Zimbabwe, since around 2017 there has been an increase in the number of state bodies, CSOs and UN agencies involved in attempts to tackle child marriage, which is often viewed as a SRHR advocacy issue (Chuma, 2017). Although these various stakeholders have taken and continue to take significant steps towards ending and preventing child marriage, it is a given that some challenges are faced which make progress difficult. However, even though there are several articles stating how the goal to end child marriage continues to be an elusive one, beyond legal and religious challenges not much information has been documented and shared on challenges faced in Zimbabwe; but it seems certain that diverse contextual realities have a role to play. For this reason, I feel that this could possibly be a research area that is worth looking into for further studies.

3.10.1 Legislative reform and lack of political will

Despite having much advocacy work done it seems as though there is a lack of political will as far as ending child marriage is concerned as the state has failed to enforce existing laws around child marriage, let alone domesticate international and regional laws which would be great assets towards fighting child marriage (PSAf, 2015). Though the practice of child marriage was ruled unconstitutional, no specific Act of Parliament against child marriages has been passed (Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, 2016). Repeated statements of intent have been made by the state Executive but no real progress is visible. For example, promises were made in 2017 to align relevant laws with the SADC Model Law but this is still to be completed. In Zimbabwe the age of sexual consent still stands at 16 yet marriage before the age of 18 was ruled unconstitutional. As noted: “This gap is cited as one of the leading catalysts towards child marriages, where children legally engage in sex without adequate information and sexual and reproductive health services and end up pregnant and or in a marriage union” (Chuma, 2017: 3). Additionally, as of 2018, Zimbabwe still did not have a decisive policy towards ending child marriage, neither was there an adequate legal and institutional framework.

Given this, it is no surprise that the Executive's apparent prioritisation of a policy shift to end child marriage is constantly questioned.

3.10.2 Lack of coordination

According to the policy brief, stakeholders working around the issue of child marriage tend “to lodge uncoordinated and sometimes parallel advocacy positions to the government” (Chuma, 2017: 1). This often leaves the government attempting to find different corrective approaches. Examples of the different advocacy positions put forward to the government include those for a stand-alone marriage act, the “alignment of current child and family law to the constitution”, the “amendment of the children's act to make it the main child marriages reference law” and the adoption of the SADC Model Law (Chuma, 2017: 5).

3.10.3 Underfunding of programmes

The underfunding of various programmes leads to a limited level of efficiency and a cap as to the number of children who can be assisted or removed from toxic environments. This ultimately relates to the number of children whose risk of marrying at a young age can be lowered. For example, there are a limited number of places of safety that children who need protection can be placed in, and this sometimes leads to some children remaining in toxic environments which they may then run away from, preferring to enter into marriage instead. Programmes such as BEAM, which funds education, also sometimes finds that some of the children can no longer be funded; and this leads to a child who had been assisted in a previous year failing to secure funding to go further with their education. Alternatively, fees are paid late thus affecting the children's learning experience. Additionally, the programme does not pay for extra lessons for the children which are necessary in some cases to ensure the child is able to progress (National Association of NGOs, Institute of Development Studies & Progressio-Zimbabwe, 2012).

3.10.4 Poverty

Another challenge towards changing mind-sets and practices is said to be the widespread poverty in the country. It is difficult to tell people to avoid marrying off their children when high levels of poverty make this seem as an attractive option for parents, who are struggling to look after their families. This may even be done with the girl's well-being at heart, as parents hope that the girl's new husband will look after her well and provide for her needs thus giving her a better life

(Human Rights Watch, 2015). Poverty also often results in girls dropping out of school, which also places them at risk for child marriage as they may view this as a viable option to a better life; or they may end up in marriages after they fall pregnant from sexual relationships in which they enter in an attempt to raise money for their school fees (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Alternatives need to be provided and poverty addressed on a larger scale for longer strides to be made towards ending child marriage (PSAf, 2015).

3.10.5 Persisting gender norms

Research has shown that, although legal reform is an important intervention for ending child marriage, on its own it is an ineffective one as child marriage is driven by communities which are the custodians of cultural beliefs and practices that sometimes encourage child marriage (SADC-PF, 2015). Engagement with the people is therefore important to change patriarchal attitudes that continue to put girls at risk. Although community dialogues and awareness raising campaigns to this end are widespread within Zimbabwe, significant ground still needs to be covered. It is essential to continue with this to ensure that mind-sets are changed.

3.10.6 Religious beliefs

Apostolic sects are well known for their promotion of child marriages amongst members. This behaviour is linked to patriarchal structures and attitudes within the church as discussed earlier. The closed nature of these apostolic sects makes it particularly difficult for outsiders to intervene and challenge their beliefs (Sibanda, 2011). This challenge was overcome by the ACCZ setting up its own unit to talk to church members about the ills related to child marriage, however, the council found that (even with interventions coming from inside) it is still difficult to change long-standing beliefs and practices especially where child marriage is concerned (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Successfully changing beliefs around marriage would require a ‘toppling’ of the current power structures and unequal power relations that subordinate women and view them only as child bearers and homemakers. These power structures also indirectly promote child marriage as practices like virginity testing and polygamy justify the exploitation of girls (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Much work still needs to be done around addressing toxic attitudes and behaviours which are promoted under the guise of religion.

3.11 Conclusion

The formation of marriages in Zimbabwe is a drawn-out process that was originally centred on the formation of good relations between families. As such, various forms of marriage existed to allow for each and every person who had the desire to marry to do so regardless of their financial standing. Some historical marriage practices, in their attempts to maintain social order and cater for men who could not afford to marry, allowed for the practice of child marriage. As with other regions in the world, child marriage amongst the Shona was in fact traditionally regarded as a normal marriage practice. As new notions of childhood were transported into Zimbabwe along with notions of human rights, the practice of child marriage became demonised and efforts began to prevent this practice and also mitigate its effects where children were already married. Despite various stakeholders playing roles in intervening on the issue of child marriage, sometimes it is the case that even strong complimentary programmes fail to address child marriage showing that it is a complex phenomenon. The complex and interrelated causes evidently need a robust intervention approach to address the negative norms and behaviours (along with issues such as poverty) so that the girl child can be adequately protected from child marriage and its far-reaching consequences.

CHAPTER 4: EXPERIENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE

4.1 Introduction

Available research carried out on child marriage tends to be missing the voices of those who have actually lived through this experience (RAU, 2015). This thesis stands in contrast to previous studies on child marriage as it is anchored on the experiences of child brides as narrated by women who were married before their 18th birthday. This chapter serves to narrate their stories, creating a backdrop from which an analysis of the experience of child marriage can be conducted. A brief discussion of the study site and the participants makes up the first part of the chapter, followed by the presentation of the 25 cases, closing the chapter with a brief conclusion.

4.2 Study Site and Participant Profiles

My research was carried out in different parts of Mabvuku (Harare), with all participants living within the community or just on the outskirts of Mabvuku. The CCWs who assisted me in identifying participants were kind enough to offer their homes as venues for my interviews. This meant that I did not have to spend time travelling from one house to another to interview the different participants whom they had managed to gather on my behalf. The workers first visited the homes of the potential participants and briefed them on the study, and then allowed them to decide on whether or not they would like to be a part of it. Those who were interested were given a time slot on a day which was convenient for them and I then arranged to meet them at the community worker's house. I also spent time walking around the community with the director of a local community based organisation who also knew child brides in the area. It was often the case that we would bump into some young women around the community and he would then introduce me and my study and ask whether they wanted to participate. Those who did would then come with me to a separate quiet area where I could brief them further on the interview and confirm their interest before proceeding. As such, some of my interviews were held at the local gym or at a make-shift restaurant in the community. The participant profiles presented below are written in order of the women's ages when they were married.

Table 3: Profiles of Research Participants

| Date of Interview | Name | Age at interview | Age at marriage | Highest level of Education | Current Marital Status |
|-------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 17.08.17 | Rati | 25 | 14 | Grade 7 (complete) | Married |
| 05.07.18 | Pamela | 25 | 14 | Grade 7 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 05.07.18 | Sophia | 23 | 14 | Grade 7 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 06.11.17 | Tatenda | 20 | 15 | Grade 5 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 20.05.18 | Itai | 22 | 15 | Form 2 (incomplete) | Married |
| 03.04.18 | Matilda | 20 | 15 | Form 3 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 05.07.18 | Martha | 22 | 15 | Grade 7 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 05.07.18 | Sally | 40 | 15 | Form 3 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 10.07.18 | Fadzi | 40 | 16 | Form 2 (incomplete) | Widowed |
| 17.08.17 | Rudo | 25 | 16 | Grade 7 (incomplete) | Married |
| 13.06.18 | Tanaka | 22 | 16 | Form 1 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 13.06.18 | Mirirai | 18 | 16 | Form 3 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 21.02.18 | Sandra | 24 | 16 | Grade 7 (incomplete) | Married |
| 16.03.18 | Vimbai | 18 | 16 | Form 4 (complete) | Separated |
| 20.05.18 | Constance | 22 | 16 | Form 4 (complete) | Married |
| 20.05.18 | Thando | 24 | 16 | Form 3 (incomplete) | Married |
| 10.07.18 | Kuda | 35 | 16 | Grade 7 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 06.11.17 | Rufaro | 20 | 17 | Form 3 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 06.11.17 | Chipo | 21 | 17 | No schooling | Separated |
| 03.04.18 | Lisa | 23 | 17 | Form 4 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 21.02.18 | Mavis | 20 | 17 | Form 4 (complete) | Married |
| 16.03.18 | Amy | 19 | 17 | Form 4 (incomplete) | Married |
| 08.07.18 | Violet | 56 | 17 | Grade 7 (incomplete) | Separated |
| 13.06.18 | Cleo | 22 | 17 | Form 4 (complete) | Separated |
| 10.07.18 | Mercy | 42 | 17 | Form 4 (complete) | Married |

As shown from the table, nine of my 25 participants were still married at the time of their interview, one had been widowed and the other 15 were separated from their husbands for various reasons. The women's level of education ranged from Grade Five (which is two years before the end of primary education) to Form Four which marks the end of the first tier of secondary schooling, with one of my participants though having no formal education at all.

In the cases of the participants, the lack of education presents itself mostly as a driver and not a consequence of child marriage. For 16 of my participants, their education came to an end not because of child marriage but because of a lack of funds for them to go further. Of these, seven failed to complete their primary schooling, six because of funding and one because of a lack of identification as she had no birth certificate. The others had at least managed to start their

secondary education. Of the 15 who managed to make it into secondary school, ten failed to make it all the way up to the end of their first⁴ examination year which is represented by ‘O’ Levels (Form Four). For six participants, this was due to a lack of funding while four dropped out of school before the exams because they had fallen pregnant. Of the five who actually completed their Form Four, two fell pregnant while waiting for exam results, two decided to marry their boyfriends and one had no funds for further education.

In the rest of the chapter, I give a summary of their experiences in detail. The outlined experiences are not linked exclusively to their marriages as they try to capture their lives in their entirety, which includes looking at life events that led to the marriage as well as the marriage itself. For those who are no longer in these unions, life after marriage is discussed in Chapter 5.

Case 1: Rati, 25

Rati was born in a small rural town where she then lived with her mother up until her sister took her in after she had just completed primary school at the age of 12. Rati referred to herself as a smart child who was unable to go any further with her schooling only because her mother could no longer afford to send her to school and her father’s family was unwilling to contribute to her upbringing. Rati began working as a domestic worker to help her mother send her two younger siblings through primary school. At the age of 14, Rati was sweet talked into having sex by her boyfriend and, when she fell pregnant, she felt marriage was the only way to handle such a situation even though her family fought against this. Rati seems to have had a glamorised idea of marriage and founding a family with the father of her child, who was 20 at the time. This may have been based on the fact that it was the norm for girls to marry early in her town and she already had friends who were married at the time. Sadly, Rati soon learnt that marriage was truly not what she had expected. From a life of independence and financial security pinned on her reasonably paying job as a domestic worker, Rati walked into a life of poverty and responsibilities for which she was not ready. Even though Rati had started taking on responsibilities at a young age, as her mother was often not around, running a separate household was a burden on her. This burden partially rested on the fact that she had quit her job when she

⁴The Zimbabwe secondary school system is divided into two stages based on the Cambridge two tier model. The first set of examinations is at the end of the fourth year and the second set is at the end of the sixth year. Others refer to the first part as secondary school and the second part as high school.

fell pregnant and moved to live with her husband. They therefore relied on one income which was based on piece jobs which he would get from time to time:

“Running a household as a child where a parent is sometimes around to supervise or help and deal with any major issues, especially the provision of finances is a lot different compared to running your household alone where everything especially the budget is dependent on you alone”- Rati 25, (17.08.17).

Rati’s interview was filled with pain and she mostly spoke in a distanced manner from her own experiences as if she was speaking of others’ experiences and not her own. She told of how the norm in marriages was cheating and that men are difficult to please:

“You could be the best wife and give your husband anything he wants and needs but he will still cheat. Now imagine in the case where you are young and not actually prepared for marriage because you have no idea what you are doing. It will be very hard to keep your husband happy”-Rati 25, (17.08.17).

Even though she spoke of herself as a good wife, she also indicated that she struggled as she had married too young without having obtained the knowledge of how to run a household or how to please one’s husband. All these are lessons she believed she would have received from her aunts (*anatete*) had she become married later on in life. Despite the hiccups in her marriage and the desire to have done things differently in the past, at the time of the interview Rati was still married with two children – the first one born when she was 17 as she had had a miscarriage with her first pregnancy at the age of 14.

Case 2: Pamela, 25

In her childhood years, Pamela lived in a small rural settlement with both her parents. Growing up, Pamela used to carry out all common household chores including looking after her three younger siblings. Throughout her childhood, Pamela lived in close proximity to her two cousins Sophia (Case 3) and Martha (Case 7). All three families were poor and the girls had to juggle school attendance with gathering firewood and selling it by the roadside as their parents needed help making ends meet. The girls often went hungry and found it difficult to concentrate in school because of this. All three were educated up until grade seven, before which their parents

even struggled to put together money to cover their fees. In her final year of primary school Pamela's father passed away. Life went from bad to worse for the families, and her in particular when a natural disaster in the same year led to forced resettlement in a temporary resettlement area. In this area, collecting firewood to sell became risky as people often got arrested by the owner of the land where they gathered the wood. Life in this resettlement area therefore started off extremely difficult with a main source of income being compromised and with families living out in the open for some time before tents were put up and temporary structures finally built by the people.

For Pamela, life was a little better before her father passed away as he was employed as a security guard and brought in some money each month. After he passed away, she and her family now relied on selling firewood and maize, which her mother would also do from time to time as she was unemployed. Pamela was married at the age of 14 to her 19-year-old boyfriend in an attempt to escape a life of poverty. She met her husband while collecting fire wood and was drawn in by the promise of gifts.

Pamela and her husband lived alone and she never met his family as both his parents had passed away some years before. Coming from a life of absolute poverty Pamela was soon wrapped up in enjoying the perks of having a man with a bit more money, such that she ensured that she avoided being seen in the area near her mother's home as her mother was constantly asking her to come home:

“My mother tried to talk some sense into me but, you know with some of these seemingly exciting things as a child, once you are in you are in. She eventually gave up and just accepted it for what it was” – Pamela 25, (05.07.18).

However, the fairy-tale soon can to an abrupt end as the reality of running a household and the expenses associated with this sunk in. Pamela was faced with a difficult financial situation and the benefits she had had as a girlfriend disappeared as money was now spent on buying household goods and not treats for her. At that point, she realised life had been better when she lived with her mother because she would not have to worry about putting food on the table or restocking essential items when they run out (because her mother as the adult and guardian shouldered this burden). Despite these difficulties, Pamela's desire for freedom, the potential of a

better life and a family of her own kept her married. Three years down the line Pamela fell pregnant with her first child. In reflection, she notes:

“Looking back I remember that I was excited about marriage but I soon realised it wasn’t all I had thought it would be. Life was better before marriage because my mother took care of providing but as a wife and mother I was then the responsible one, running around making sure people have been fed. I was constantly stressed and couldn’t enjoy life with others. When I fell pregnant I was even more stressed because I was worried about providing for the child” – Pamela, 25 (05.07.18).

While she thought her biggest concern was how she and her husband would take care of their child, her husband fled in 2011 a few months after she had given birth. This was just over three years into their marriage. After he ran away she was forced to return to her mother’s house as a single mother. Looking back, Pamela spoke of how her father’s death and her lack of education turned her life upside down and put her down the path she now finds herself unable to get off:

“When I was in primary school I had high hopes. I thought I would end up living a good life, working at a decent job and getting married to a good man but, because my education ended abruptly, everything changed and I had to rework my life plan but even today life is just tough” – Pamela, 25 (05.07.18).

Case 3: Sophia, 23

Sophia was forced into marriage at the age of 14 after her mother sent her back to her boyfriend’s house where she had spent the night. Sophia had slept away from home on many occasions from the age of 13. By the time she turned 14, her mother was fed up with her behaviour and out of frustration told her to return to where she had spent the night; so she went back believing that her boyfriend loved her and wanted to be with her but she was mistaken:

“This boy had not been honest with me that he doesn’t want to marry yet so I went there and he ended up being violent. He would beat me telling me that I had come to him without his permission or without him expressing that he wanted me there”. – Sophia, 23 (05.07.18).

During the time she now considered herself married, her mother tried to get her to come back home a number of times by sending Pamela and Martha (see Case 2) to fetch her. Sophia initially refused as she was enjoying the first weeks of her newly founded marriage but, as things began to take a turn for the worse, the desire to take up her mother's offer surfaced; however, by this point Sophia suspected she was pregnant. She therefore refused to return home as she did not want to go back home to burden her mother with another dependent to look after, so she stuck it out in the hopes of things changing:

“Yes he used to abuse me but I thought I might be pregnant so I refused to go back home when my mom would send for me, until I eventually accepted that the situation was too bad for me to stay. I really wanted to have my own family and a marriage, I still do even to this day but it seems it's just not for me. I've tried and tried but it never works out” – Sophia, 23 (05.07.18).

Sophia returned home to live with her mother, unfortunately the baby she was carrying did not survive. Less than a year later she soon found herself in another relationship that led to a second elopement before she turned 18. Her husband's parents were deceased, so she lived alone with him on his stand; but there were four other people there who she also looked after in terms of carrying out chores. In this case, she also fell pregnant and once the pregnancy was confirmed *tsvakirai kuno* was paid. However, once this money was paid, her husband began distancing himself and eventually abandoned her.

Although Sophia was in effect married twice before her 18th birthday, she mostly spoke of the second instance as this is the one which she felt was more formalised and lasted a little longer than the first marriage. According to Sophia, life was tough before marriage and equally tough during it. Finances were tight as her husband had small jobs here and there and sometimes got paid in small portions of mealie-meal and cooking oil. All in all, the marriage left her worse off as, after her husband abandoned her, she returned to her childhood home again where she sat unemployed until she decided to pursue an independent life just after she turned 18. Unfortunately, this desire for independence ultimately led to a life of prostitution.

“Up until today I can’t ever say I’ve had a good life. It has always been one struggle after another. Right now the money we make at the beer halls isn’t even a lot because of the economic situation and we are also competing with younger school girls who also want to make money so life is tough but yeah that’s how I make my living” – Sophia 23, (05.07.18).

Case 4: Tatenda, 20

Tatenda grew up in a small rural town moving from one home to another after her mother passed away when she was two. After first living in a rural area where she missed the first few years of schooling, most of her childhood was then spent living with her paternal aunt (*tete*) who managed to send her to school up until grade five before her husband began complaining about them raising Tatenda; yet her father was alive and was not contributing to her upkeep. The tension in the home along with her uncle’s disinterest in furthering her education led to her dropping out of school. She stayed in their home for a period of two years during which time she was unemployed and often left to go hungry because of her father’s lack of contributions which were due to his own financial struggles. It is during this time that her boyfriend, who was in his early 30s, proposed that she move to his house as his wife. Tatenda, who was 15 at the time, gladly agreed as this would free her from her abusive living environment. She entered her husband’s childhood home in the form of an elopement marriage and her mother-in-law welcomed her with open arms. For the first few years of her marriage Tatenda lived with her mother-in-law at her husband’s childhood home while he worked in a nearby city. Most of the time her marital duties were suspended as she was living only with her mother-in-law, which she believes made her transition to marriage simple as all she had to do were regular chores:

“When I lived with my aunt I was the only girl so I was the one responsible for washing plates, fetching water, making sure the house is kept clean and doing the laundry. I would only ask my aunt what to make for dinner. I was fine with carrying out this work and when I got married I was only expected to do similar duties so it was easy.”–Tatenda 20, (06.11.17).

Tatenda’s husband visited her at the end of every month and was sure to provide for all her needs, making sure she was happy and well taken care of. Her mother-in-law was loving and made Tatenda feel at home. They generally got on very well and her mother-in-law eventually

confronted her son about leaving Tatenda there at his childhood home, yet he could just take her with him to his home in the city. After much pressure from his mother, her husband agreed to take Tatenda but, before they had arrived to the city where he lived and worked, he confessed to her that he actually had a wife who was living with him and Tatenda would have to learn to deal with it. This came as a shock not only to Tatenda but to his mother-in-law as well when Tatenda eventually told her. For Tatenda, this confession changed their marriage for good and it was one which there was no coming back from. Upon arriving, her husband asked his sister to accompany them to his home where she (his sister) acted as a “middle man” between him and his first wife and asked for forgiveness on his behalf as his first wife did not know about Tatenda.

Even though Tatenda was hurt and confused she decided to stay in the marriage, but tension between her and the first wife meant they could not all live in the same house or area. Tatenda’s husband got her a separate cottage and, despite the tension that was building in their marriage, her husband pushed her to have a baby even though she did not want to. Tatenda soon fell pregnant and her pregnancy led to the further disintegration of their marriage as her husband then became distant and verbally and emotionally abusive, ultimately choosing his first wife over her. Tatenda also suffered similar abuse from his first wife who even took it a step further and often showed up at her place of residence with the intention of physically assaulting her for having interfered in her marriage. Even though Tatenda told her husband about these incidents, he did not intervene. As she lamented:

“When I was now pregnant we weren’t living well together because it turned out the man I had gone to Karoi for was actually a married man with two children. He had told me this on the way to Karoi and I thought I could handle it but once I fell pregnant he became very mean. He kept trying to chase me away saying he didn’t want me but I told myself to hang in there until after I had given birth. He now just wanted his first wife and didn’t care about me... She [his wife] would also come to my house shouting that if I didn’t leave she would bewitch me so I can’t give birth. She also once showed up with a knife threatening to kill me” –Tatenda 20,(06.11.17).

Although Tatenda raved about her marriage being great before the move, she also noted that she would have preferred to have never married and braved through her uncle’s abuse than to end up in such a troubled marital situation. After trying to stick it out because of her baby, she

eventually left the marriage at the age of 17 soon after the birth, as she could no longer tolerate the toxicity. Tatenda's husband never bothered to find her after she left so she assumed he truly did not care. In her opinion, her marriage would have remained strong to this day had it not been uncovered that he had another wife.

Case 5: Itai, 22

As a child, Itai lived with her father in Bulawayo until he passed away just before she completed her primary schooling. She had never met her mother and she was taken to live with her paternal grandparents who were initially welcoming and kind. Although her paternal grandparents could not put her through school, as they were unemployed because of their age, they provided a home for Itai. She soon began working on a nearby farm where there was also a school which the employer allowed the younger workers to attend. She worked and studied there for two years as a secondary school student before the school closed down. She then travelled to Harare in search of her biological mother and ended up living with her maternal grandparents for some time although she never met her mother whilst she was there.

Itai's grandparents were the care givers of a number of grandchildren. Her maternal grandfather was abusive and intolerant of his grandchildren, referring to them as the son-in-law's property despite no bride wealth having been paid by the fathers (so that genetricial rights were transferred to them). The children often went hungry and he tried to chase some of them away (Itai included) on more than one occasion, but she put up with this as she had nowhere else to turn. When she was 15 she began looking after her step-sister, doing odd jobs so she had money to get food for both of them. While working she met and started a relationship with a 17-year-old boy. There soon came a day when he invited her to visit his house and she ended up staying there permanently instead of returning home. At the time he lived with his young uncle who had also recently married and had probably encouraged him to do the same. This is most likely the reason he readily accepted Itai and it may have actually had a significant role in her 'deciding' to stay, even though his mother did not approve of the premature union. Despite her young age, Itai believes she handled the transition into marriage well and went on to even learn valuable lessons as a married woman:

“I think the transition wasn’t so hard for me because I was actually a bit mature; I was already used to looking after myself and my younger sister. I was technically the head of the household so when I got married I was at an advantage. Doing the chores and keeping the household in order was like my second nature, but I honestly did find it strange that I was now someone’s wife. At the end of it all though marriage actually helped me to become even more mature, it taught me about the challenges one can face in life and how to approach them. For example, I have learnt to listen to advice instead of being stubborn and thinking I know it all” – Itai 22, (20.05.18).

During the first part of their union, for some time Itai’s husband was the only one working but he managed to provide adequately for his family. Although he never paid the bride wealth, the couple lived happily with Itai viewing this part of her life as having been far better than before, where she was unloved and struggling in poverty. As she indicated:

“When the marriage started, it was exciting because you are young and carefree, your concerns are not so great. I wasn’t expected to do too much work and, when we lived in a more rural area, he even used to be the one going to collect the firewood so I wouldn’t have to. I could tell that he really loved me” – Itai 22, (20.05.18).

Although Itai spoke fondly of her husband and her marriage, she also acknowledged that they had their fair share of problems. After they had been in their union for a brief period, he left her for about three months and went to live with his aunt; then he came back and the couple moved to his mother’s house. They lived there for a few months before he disappeared again for almost a year. He repeated this a third time but returning after 7 months. When he left the third time, 16-year-old Itai was pregnant and upon his return he became a nuisance. His unpleasant behaviour then turned into episodes of physical abuse, which led to Itai leaving the marriage and taking her child to live with her relatives in Bulawayo while she tried to find a job in Harare. This separation occurred in 2013 when Itai was 17. She bumped into him in 2016 which got them talking and ultimately resulted in them getting back together:

“He came to where I was staying with my sister and asked to see me, telling me that he wanted to get a job so we could get our child back and live together. He came with one of

his cousins who was supporting him and asking for forgiveness. I didn't really want to accept but then they got my sister's help and she is the one who convinced me to give him another chance. So I went and joined him in Epworth [in Harare] and later got our child so she could live with us". – Itai 22, (20.05.18).

Reflecting on the past 3 years which they have been back together, Itai believes the second chance was worth it because he turned out to indeed be a changed man who no longer spends nights out and is very supportive of her. They plan on having another child but Itai would like to get a job first. As a married woman she now lives with her husband, his mother, an aunt and uncle and their children. They get along well and take her as one of the family. Itai keeps to herself and focuses on doing her chores and looking after her family:

"Even though I've had it good I wouldn't encourage child marriage. People must get their own stuff and be independent so your husband can't look down at you and show off about his achievements." – Itai 22, (20.05.18).

Case 6: Matilda, 20

Matilda grew up living with her mother and her aunt in an urban high density residential area. Matilda's mother provided for her and managed to fund her education all the way up until Form Three. This is when she fell pregnant and subsequently stopped going to school as her child would have just been born by the time she was expected to write her 'O' Level examinations. Matilda initially hid her pregnancy from her family but knew this could not last forever:

"I eloped mainly because I had fallen pregnant. I initially tried to hide it but realised that I was starting to show and I couldn't keep staying at home. So I decided to tell my boyfriend to hear what he thought about the situation. When we spoke on the phone he agreed that we could look after the child together and that he would get a place or us together." - Matilda 20, (03.04.18).

After speaking to her boyfriend, Matilda also then consulted her sister who encouraged her to take him up on his offer by eloping to his house, and only returning home to take care of the baby alone if he refused to take responsibility. Matilda's sister then escorted her to his house and left her by the gate. Upon arriving at her boyfriend's house where he lived with his parents, her

boyfriend denied being the father of her child or even knowing her. The neighbours eventually intervened and convinced his family to at least let her into the house, which was 19 hours after she had first arrived. She related this experience as follows:

“It was cold and raining on that day but because he had denied knowing me his parents refused to let me into the house. So I just sat there in the cold waiting for them to come around. Even in the morning he was still refusing, saying he actually has a girlfriend he wants to marry and his parents know that girl is not me. His parents confirmed this saying this was indeed the reason they wouldn’t let me in, but the baby was his and I wasn’t leaving”-Matilda 20, (03.04.18).

Hearing what was happening, her uncle came to collect her at the house. Her parents had also agreed for her to come back home, where they could look after her and the baby and also help her to find a job but she refused. Her uncle, eventually giving in after seeing that she was not leaving without a fight, informed the boyfriend and his family that seeing that he had denied paternity, once the baby was born they would carry out DNA tests. If he turned out to be the father, then Matilda’s family would press charges against him for having sex with a minor. Her boyfriend then admitted knowing her and being the father of the child and stated that he was willing to live with her and take care of her. After the threat, his parents also fell in line and agreed with the arrangement. For the next three years, Matilda lived with her husband at his parent’s house. *Tsvakirai kuno* was paid when Matilda was nine months pregnant and her parents accepted it. The baby was born when Matilda was 16.

The first two years that Matilda spent living in her in-laws’ home went well. They accepted her into their home with warmth and provided for all her needs, making sure she was always happy. Despite not having been ready for marriage at the time, Matilda was willing to learn and adjust to the various tasks required of her such as taking care of her husband and his family, and washing and cooking for him. She found the transition challenging as she was not used to carrying out chores or holding responsibilities such as handling finances, running the kitchen and sometimes having to provide food when there was no money. Looking at this closely, the fact that her in-laws placed such a burden on Matilda in terms of her having to plan for and make meals (yet there was clearly no food in the house) may have been an indication of their underlying hate as

Matilda herself was unemployed. This burden therefore led to many stressful situations where she would have to go out of her way to figure out how to get food on the table without an official income. This burden is surely one which her in-laws knew was a difficult one to carry alone.

Once Matilda turned 18, her in-laws became cruel. She would go without food and be physically and verbally abused. As well, her husband often told her that he had not wanted to be with her and had been forced to take her; so she should just go back to her own house, leaving him with his child who he would gladly take care of without her involvement. Her family did once try and convince her to come back home after the baby was born. They committed to help look after them both but she again refused until she realised that her fight was in vain as the family she was fighting for had no interest in her.

While her father-in-law was a kind man and felt sorry for her, her mother-in-law played a significant role in Matilda's verbal and emotional abuse. At one point, Matilda mentioned going back to school but her husband would not allow her to do so. Thus, she ended opening up a tuck-shop using a congratulatory gift from their union, but her husband would steal her profits if he came across the money. She would then find herself borrowing money to go and buy stock for the tuck-shop, because he would use the money on alcohol and cigarettes and the girl he wanted to marry (who may or may not have been aware of his other wife – Matilda). Her mother-in-law had no problems with her son impregnating other women after he was already married and, in fact, she encouraged him and welcomed these women into the home. But they refused to stay after finding out he was already married and his wife was staying on the same premises.

During this period, Matilda's health was negatively affected as she caught STIs including genital warts. She also experienced painful intercourse. She confronted him about the STIs and he turned the tables by claiming that he had no symptoms; to date, she is not sure whether he ever got treatment. She stayed for longer than she should have in the hopes of things getting better because growing up she had heard that *ndozvinoita imba* or *ndokutanga kweimba* (which translates to “that’s what happens in a marriage” and “this is how homes are built”). These phrases can be traced back to lessons that young women are given about staying with their husbands during challenging times including infidelity, because it is all part of the process of building a strong marriage.

Seeing that his infidelity was not encouraging her to leave, her husband began disappearing for months at a time, leaving her alone in the home with his parents. There eventually came a time at which he announced that he would not be returning at all, and he instructed his parents to kick her out of the house two months after his departure. His mother was keen to oblige as she stated that she had been trying to figure out a way to get rid of Matilda. His mother however failed and Matilda continued to stay. Matilda eventually left after she had a fight with her husband about him wanting to keep the baby's birth certificate, as she refused, knowing he was setting the stage to keep her child away from her. After the fight, he literally carried her and threw her and her belongings out of the house. She then decided to go back to her parents' house in Mabvuku. This is how their marriage ended. As she indicated:

“I only realised this now as I look back having left that home, that it is only when I turned 18 that they began showing their true colours and mistreating me. They began handling me badly, speaking the truth that they only took me in because of the legal threat. Even though we lived in the same house, they would even take my child saying I don't deserve him and have no rights. So sometimes my child would not be allowed to sleep in the same room with me and if they wanted to they would take him out of the house without asking me... The fights always came down to him saying he hadn't wanted to marry me and I had forced him” –Matilda 20, (03.04.18).

Given the ‘blackmail’ which led to Matilda forcing her way into a marriage, it comes as no surprise that once Matilda turned 18 and the threat of legal action was no longer hanging over their heads, her husband and his family turned against her. While the marriage ultimately turned out in a negative manner, with Matilda viewing herself as having been better off in her parent's house where she was well looked after, she maintained that it was a bitter sweet experience which had its fair share of happy moments too:

“Looking back, I see now that I married way too young. Also if a man initially doesn't want to take responsibility for his child, this should not be forced on him. You may have a better experience staying alone or with parents than clinging onto someone who is reluctant to be involved with you.” –Matilda 20, (03.04.18).

Case 7: Martha, 22

In her childhood years, Martha lived in a small rural town with both her parents until they both passed away. Growing up, she lived in close proximity to her two cousins, Pamela (Case 2) and Sophia (Case 3). The mothers of all three girls were sisters and the families lived side by side such that, when Martha's parents passed away, she had parental figures close by. Life was a struggle as her family was poor and found it difficult to provide the basics such as food. When Martha was 13, her mother passed away and she went to live with her maternal aunt who she referred to as "my younger mother". This reflects the Shona heritage of strong familial links amongst extended family members. However, this living arrangement did not work well for her.

"When I was living with her I just felt uncomfortable being dependent on her and so I started working. I took on jobs as a house girl and would work for 2 or 3 months at a time, coming home each time I felt home sick. This made it difficult for me to hold on to a job in the long run. I kept doing this up until the time I eloped". – Martha 22, (05.07.18).

Looking for love and excitement, along with the promise of a better life, Martha entered into an elopement marriage at the age of 15. Her boyfriend of two years was 25 at the time and worked as a conductor for a local commuter omnibus owner, which meant that he had a daily income and could provide for her, which was more than she could say for any of her family members. Martha's aunt accepted her decision to be with him as he came to their home and introduced himself, notifying her that he would be responsible for Martha and that her family could turn to him should any harm come to her. The excitement of marriage quickly died down as Martha learnt that she was not the only one her husband would chase after and give benefits to. Even as a married man, he continued with the same antics that he had used to reel Martha in. He began cheating with various women, often women who were much older than him. During the course of their marriage, she also found out that he was not separated from his first wife as he had initially claimed, so that they were actually still married. Despite all this, Martha stayed in the marriage for two years before eventually choosing to part ways as she could no longer tolerate his behaviour. However, with the desire of being provided for and the memory of living an independent life from her family away from home as shown below, Martha remarried at the age of 17:

“Even though I was still quite young I didn’t really struggle taking that leap from being a child to a wife because it didn’t really exist. My husband was hardly ever home as he would be working so I was able to continue with life as usual. I had freedom to play with my friends in the street and enjoy dancing at road shows. It was like a prolonged sleep over with a boyfriend” – Martha 22, (05.07.18).

Martha’s second husband, however, pursued the union more officially as, when they started their home together in 2015, he paid *tsvakirai kuno* and even introduced her to his family who were accepting of her. Martha then convinced him to move back to her mother’s house with her:

“After I left my first husband, I met another man who I became involved with and this time I am the one who caused him to elope and not the other way round [chuckles]. He moved from the area he was staying and came to live with me here at my mom’s house. This is the man I was married to until a few months ago” – Martha 22, (05.07.18).

This marriage was a good one in her books as she truly felt like part of a stable loving family. When she fell pregnant some months down the line, his entire family rejoiced. She was also ecstatic because of all the attention, particularly from her husband who doted on her because it was his first child. Her mother-in-law, with whom she was close, took it upon herself to groom her and also teach her how to take care of her baby and her husband. The unfortunate matter was that her husband began using drugs and threatened to take his life on many occasions, and this eventually ended that marriage early on in 2018.

Case 8: Sally, 40

Sally was born in Harare where she also grew up living with both her parents until they separated when she was in grade 7. Sally’s father worked as a gardener for a white family and he brought in a reasonable amount of money, which he used to start small side ventures that increased the household income. As a young girl, Sally carried out household chores with the help of her sisters and eventually a domestic worker. She recalls the chores as being tough because of the young age at which she started carrying them out, but she coped because of the roles her sisters also played in assisting with the chores. The burden Sally carried as a child was mostly because of her mother’s limited involvement in their upbringing. As she recounted:

“My mother was a small scale farmer but she also used to abuse alcohol. Her drinking used to get to me because it meant she could not look after us well or assist with chores. I then became the mother looking after my siblings, making sure they have bathed and eaten. I remember when my sisters contracted tuberculosis, I was the one who had to run around taking them to the clinic and so on because my mother was so disengaged. Maybe this is one of the reasons they [my parents] eventually broke up, because of the alcohol” – Sally 40, (05.07.18).

When her parents separated, she moved to the rural area with her father and there she completed her primary education and went onto into secondary school. During that time, Sally lived with her father and her step mother. When Sally was in Form Three, she fell pregnant and was forced to elope to her 20-year-old boyfriend’s house which resulted in her no longer being able to go to school. Her parents took her to her boyfriend’s house where he accepted responsibility for making her pregnant and so his family took her in.

When Sally arrived at his home in April of 1993, she was welcomed by his family as their daughter-in-law. However, her mother-in-law often complained that she had not been given the chance to enjoy her son’s money before he brought home a wife. It was later revealed to her that, even though this was her mother-in-law’s sentiments when Sally first arrived, she was the one who had actually convinced her son to impregnate her in the first place. In this way, Sally would not end up leaving for Harare after completing her ‘O’ Level examinations. This explains why her boyfriend seemed to be ready for her to fall pregnant because, when he would come to her house late at night, he would leave an item of clothing for her to hold onto; in case things “went wrong”, she could use this as evidence that he was the person responsible. Her friends laughed at her for having fallen pregnant, as smart girls were not expected to find themselves in such precarious positions.

Life as a young wife was generally difficult, partially because the marriage led to a drop in her socio-economic status. Having been accustomed to a lower middle class life, she moved towards extreme poverty as her husband was unemployed and she even had to bring bedding for them to use together. Together they lived with his mother at their rural home, where Sally was often required to go foraging for wild vegetables for them to eat, as not much food was available. Even as a pregnant woman, she was expected to carry out heavy chores at the homestead by her

mother-in-law. Sally was saddened by the fact that she could not even prepare properly for the birth of her baby due to a lack of funds. The birth itself almost became life-threatening as his family wanted her to have a home birth with the local midwives because they had no money for her to go the hospital. It was only after a concerned neighbour intervened many hours into labour, noting how the difficult birthing procedure and complications could be due to her young age that they took her to the hospital on the daily bus.

When Sally returned home from the hospital she was met with hostility as her mother-in-law was holding onto superstitious beliefs that she had failed to give birth in their family's home because the child did not belong to Sally's husband. Even her husband turned against her and no longer showed an interest in her. She was told to return to her own family, but her new step-mother would not allow her to because of the fact that no bride wealth had been paid:

“I would only go to my father's home when he was home requesting to see me; when he wasn't there, my step-mother didn't want me there and preferred me gone. I therefore remained with my mother-in-law who frustrated me to the point where I contemplated ending my life along with that of my child as I could not even think of leaving her behind with no one to look after.” – Sally 40, (10.07.18).

While her husband was aware of all that was going on, he claimed that he could not intervene in the issue as he was also young and his mother could have possibly been right about Sally sleeping around and falling pregnant by someone else.

Contributing to Sally's uncomfortable living situation were the letters she would often find between her husband and other young women who he was promising to marry after having successfully chased her away. Her husband's father is the one who intervened at a later date and convinced her mother-in-law to allow her and the child to stay in their home. Sally suffered from the effects of isolation as her step mother would not allow her younger siblings to visit because of the bride wealth issue. Her father-in-law was the only one who cared for her and showed her some affection. Sally eventually lived alone with her father-in-law at her husband's rural home as her mother-in-law began living in Harare whilst her husband had been instructed to go in search of a job.

On her own, she could not run away and return to her birth mother in the city as she had no money. But her husband eventually sent her money so she could join him in Harare where he was also working. When she arrived in Harare, she found that he was back to being affectionate and attempted to get back in her good graces, but Sally was no longer interested in the relationship and this officially led to the end of their marriage in 1995. She added:

“Even my mother tried to convince me to forgive him but I was already over it [the marriage]. His very presence and looking at his face made me cringe because of the way that he had hurt me. I wasn’t even allowed to get a birth certificate for my child because of his mother’s interference and insistence that the child was not his and I will never forget that.” – Sally 40, (05.07.18).

After Sally refused to continue with their marriage, her husband eventually remarried and Sally ended up living with her mother and her child.

Case 9: Fadzi, 40

Fadzi grew up living with her grandmother and siblings in Mabvuku as her parents had passed away when she was very young. Her mother’s brothers were responsible for paying for her school fees but she eventually had to drop out of school in Form Two (at 14 years old) because of a shortage of funds. She started working as a part-time domestic worker but money remained hard to come by. Providing the basics was challenging as her grandmother was unemployed. Ideally her uncles were meant to be taking care of the family but they seldom made an effort to provide. The ongoing hardships Fadzi and her grandmother faced eventually led to her grandmother making the decision to marry Fadzi off to an older man. According to Fadzi, this man, who she did not fancy appeared to be over the age of 30. Knowing that her fate was sealed if she stayed, Fadzi decided to find a man of her own choosing, and so she did. Thus at the age of 16 she eloped to start a life with her chosen suitor.

Fadzi met her husband at the local shops and a month later the couple arranged for her to elope. At the time that she eloped her husband (who was 28) was still living at home with his parents in Epworth (in Harare) and so this is where she then also lived. Her grandmother found out where she was and went and collected her but she ran away a second time and returned to his home. She spoke about these experiences as follows:

“You think if you get married you will have someone to look after you. I expected to find someone who loved me, kept me happy and looked after me and that is exactly what I got. Before I was married life was difficult financially, I had to do piece jobs. My mother’s brothers who were supposed to look after us lived in a different town and didn’t come often so my marriage was a real blessing.”- Fadzi 40, (17.08.18).

Although Fadzi’s husband was unemployed when they got married, he eventually started doing piece jobs and they worked together to bring in an income which made life better for her as compared to life with her grandmother. Fadzi spoke of her marriage in a positive manner and had no regrets, but she also acknowledged that she married too early and found it difficult to leave behind her childish ways and had considerable maturing to do once she was in her in-law’s home.

Fadzi gave birth to a child two years down the line and this was their only child, as they agreed not to expand their family unless at least one of them was permanently employed and having a decent, stable income. She lived well with her husband but he passed away seven years after they had gotten married. She then ended up moving back to Mabvuku from Epworth. Her daughter who is 22 also eloped and is currently living with her husband in another town.

Case 10: Rudo, 25

Rudo grew up in a small rural town with her grandmother who offered to take her in as both of Rudo’s parents had remarried and formed new families. Her elderly grandmother did a good job of raising her and managed to send her to school up until grade seven; then the money she had set aside for Rudo while she could still work, ran out. At the age of 13, Rudo decided to move to Harare where she worked as a domestic worker and sent money back to her grandmother, so that her grandmother could put the other grandchildren who were in her care through primary school as well. She worked in Harare for three years before a childhood friend, who had shown a romantic interest in her, convinced her to move back home and start a life with him. Enticed by the idea of marriage, Rudo left her job and moved in with the 18-year-old who happily claimed her as his wife despite her grandmother fighting against this decision. Although Rudo now wishes she had established herself and waited a little longer before getting married so that she

could hold onto her financial independence, she views her marriage as a good one besides a few ‘normal’ marital squabbles. She thus notes:

“The best thing about my husband is that he loves me and is very supportive. I’m good at playing sports, soccer in particular, and he sponsors me to play in the branch tournaments because he knows this is my passion...We also share all the money that comes in; we’re a team and we plan things together” – Rudo25, (13.06.18).

Rudo lived with her husband for a few years before he engaged in the initial bride wealth negotiations with her family, by which he took groceries and other special foods which she referred to as *mavhizhongo*. Although nothing further was ever paid, they managed to enter into a civil marriage and continue to live together as husband and wife with their three children, the first of whom she had at 16. Her kids, aged nine, five and three, are loved and well looked after by their father. They are all enrolled in school and the family does not face significant financial difficulty as her husband earns enough to cater for their needs. Along with being thankful for her marriage, Rudo is also grateful for the positive relationship she has with his family, particularly his mother who played a key role in grooming Rudo as a wife and a mother:

“When we first got married we lived with the in-laws. Because of their Malawian heritage, the first thing his mother did was send me to chinamwari because that’s their custom. At chinamwari they teach you how to take care of your husband and you get to know what men like. Back then I also liked to play out on the street with other girls and I used to neglect my household duties a lot of the time, so she taught me how to behave as a wife and gently led me through a sort of transition process.” – Rudo25, (13.06.18).

Rudo acknowledged that although she grew up carrying out household chores and had been undergoing a grooming process to one day run her own household, and had even worked as a domestic worker, this had not fully prepared her for running her own household. She spoke highly of her mother-in-law’s influence in helping her adjust. Her mother-in-law ultimately played a big role in providing some much needed guidance, and helping Rudo to eventually step up and run the household without supervision. Though Rudo believes that she would have been better prepared to handle marital responsibilities had she waited until she was at least 18, she

also acknowledged that no one can ever really learn all there is to know before entering into marriage.

Case 11: Tanaka, 22

After her mother passed away when she was six, Tanaka lived with her father briefly before living with her grandparents who took on the role of nurturing her and raising her up until her teenage years. Just after starting secondary school, Tanaka had to drop out as her father could no longer afford to pay her fees. She then spent most of her time at home with her grandparents. As she grew older and sought to become more independent, particularly with regards to her religious beliefs, tension began to build up between her and her grandparents who were intolerant of members of the religious sect that Tanaka had become a part of because they did not share the same views. The tension peaked with an incident where her grandfather almost stabbed her during a confrontation. This incident led Tanaka, who was 16 at the time, to run off to her 23-year-old boyfriend's house, even though she was aware of the laws against child marriage. At that point he was employed as a commuter omnibus driver and she had been dating him for about five years, after having met him at a sports tournament when they were both still students.

Tanaka fell pregnant soon after eloping and she was excited about this. The first six months of the marriage went well, with them initially living with his parents and then moving to a place of their own. As a guest in her in-law's house, Tanaka was unemployed and she was looked after well by both her in-laws and her husband. However, while the burden of work was not a factor, Tanaka struggled to adjust to married life because of the behavioural expectations that are linked to being a wife:

“When I first moved in with his family they treated me well and didn't want me burdened by work; there was an aunt also living there and she did the bulk of the work. They didn't even want me to be involved with the gardening even though I was good at it... Even though you don't do any work the transition to being a wife is hard, especially when you get married without really wanting to. Because of the situation, I was forced to always stay indoors as a married woman. I wasn't allowed to do the things that I was used to and had no freedom.” –Tanaka 22, (21.02.18).

A few months into the marriage, various issues began creeping into their marriage. Her husband began exhibiting jealousy and controlling her behaviour. He also began smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol. Tanaka spent a considerable amount of time in pain as he would beat her and throw her against the wall, accusing her of cheating. Some incidents were so severe that she had to be taken to the hospital. Seeing this violent behaviour, his parents sought to distance themselves from the couple as they wanted nothing to do with him in the event that he ended up killing her. This is how Tanaka and her husband ended up moving out of his parent's house. Unfortunately, it only got worse and there even came a point where, after she gave birth, he chased her away claiming the baby was not his. In retrospect, Tanaka says his controlling streak had been evident in the fact that he was not supportive of her ideas to better her life, but she never thought it would escalate to the level which it did.

A year after she got married Tanaka could no longer tolerate the abuse and she put an end to their marriage. According to her, ultimately her child is the only good thing that came out of that marriage. As she put it:

“My husband used to beat me. He was very troublesome. When I gave birth I got 16 stitches, six on the inside and ten on the outside. Four days after I gave birth, he wanted to have sex and he forced himself on me and I ended up getting hurt and this is how the big fight eventually broke out. After this incident he then started lying that I had told him the child wasn't his. I ended up walking away from the marriage after he hit me with a bottle when our son was nine days old. Ultimately we failed to live well together because he was violent; he even used to threaten to beat up my relatives... One time he saw me standing with my cousin who he didn't know, and after that he hit me saying I was whoring around”. - Tanaka22, (21.02.18).

Case 12: Mirirai, 18

Mirirai grew up in a high density residential area with her grandmother and siblings because her parents had separated. Growing up she lacked for nothing as her grandmother, her mother (who was based in South Africa) and her step brother (who was the manager of the family owned transport business) provided for all her needs. Given the multiple sources of income, the family was able to afford a domestic worker who sometimes helped with the household chores that

Mirirai was expected to perform. Mirirai fell pregnant before her 'O' Level exams and she stopped going to school because she was embarrassed, as she was one of the popular girls. Given her desire to avoid being discovered as pregnant, she also lied to her mother that she no longer wanted to stay with her grandmother as she was not treating her well; her mother then sent her money so that she join her in South Africa. Her 23-year-old boyfriend agreed with the plan of her going to South Africa until he was ready to take on the responsibility of looking after and providing for her and their baby but, as soon as she arrived in South Africa, he then told her to terminate the pregnancy while she was there as their relationship was over from that point onward.

Once Mirirai arrived in South Africa, her mother realised that Mirirai was pregnant and, after consulting Mirirai's boyfriend's aunt (*tete*), Mirirai's mother sent her back to Zimbabwe as suggested by his aunt. She noted that it would be easier to deal with the situation if Mirirai was in Zimbabwe and was able to meet his parents, who had no idea he had impregnated a girl. Once back in Zimbabwe, her boyfriend tried on two more occasions to push her to terminate the pregnancy. She continued the story as follows:

“The third time he tried to get me to abort, he actually took me to someone who does this type of stuff and paid for me to have the procedure done. When he left the room, the lady could see that I was unhappy and she said she was willing to pocket the money and only pretend to do the abortion if I in fact didn't want it; so I agreed and that's what she did. After that we both just pretended as though the pregnancy had been terminated.... Months later, when my boyfriend finally realised what I had done, he seemed unhappy about it but he gave in to the idea of having a baby. He apologised after he realised I was so serious about keeping the baby that I was willing to commit suicide should he continue trying to get rid of my baby.”-Mirirai 18, (16.03.18).

According to Mirirai, her obvious attachment to the baby is what gave her boyfriend the change of heart and even resulted in him suggesting an elopement marriage. At this point her father-in-law suggested that Mirirai live with his family. After speaking to his family further, Mirirai's boyfriend informed her that she was to be taken to his rural home where she would be officially welcomed as a daughter-in-law. She agreed to go, not knowing that her mother-in-law had

planned to ensure Mirirai stayed on at their rural home while her son returned to Harare to continue living with his father. Mirirai explained this as a ploy to keep the two apart and to breakdown Mirirai emotionally, so that she would leave her now husband and the family. Indeed, a few days after their arrival for the welcoming in the rural area, her husband returned to Harare leaving Mirirai with her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law further interfered with their relationship by ensuring her son often had no means of communicating with Mirirai. When they did communicate, this happened after stretches of time and the fact that he rarely came to visit did not make matters any better.

As the birth of the child approached, *masungiro*⁵ was paid and Mirirai was taken back to her childhood home under the guise of waiting out the birth of the baby. She later found out that her mother-in-law had in fact not planned on taking her back. This scheme was likely carried out in the hope that Mirirai who would then be left in her childhood home living as a single mother without the support of her husband's family, and would cave under the pressure and give up the child to her husband's family. However, this plan did not work which resulted in Mirirai being transported back to her mother-in-law after the birth of the child. During this time, her husband would plan brief visits to check up on the baby.

While her husband showed that he evidently loved his child, Mirirai's relationship with her husband was rocky:

“He had periods where he would say he wanted to end the marriage. Then he would come back having changed his mind saying he had only said that because he hadn't established himself and had nothing to give a wife and a baby. He just couldn't make up his mind and I think his mother had something to do with it.”-Mirirai 18, (16.03.18).

Life was generally not good right after she got married, as her husband showed a high level of immaturity and was also unemployed, which may have been why he rarely visited her. Her attempts to make a life with him after she had returned to the mother-in-law's home after the birth of their child were also all in vain as they kept falling apart. She highlighted:

⁵*Masungiro* is the payment given in the form of a goat after a woman conceives for the first time. This payment allows for the woman to return to her parents' home to await the birth of the child.

“He still likes having a good time, hanging out with single friends so it was also obvious the marriage wasn’t going anywhere. He also uses unemployment as an excuse to be unable to take care of a family and yet some of my family members have even tried to get him jobs but he failed to show up.”-Mirirai 18, (16.03.18).

Although her mother-in-law disliked Mirirai and did not support the marriage, her father-in-law and her step-mother-in-law (who lived in Harare) were kind to her and treated her with affection and respect when they interacted with her. This kindness was expected as her father-in-law always mentioned his desire to have her as a part of his family. His treatment of her contributed to her decision to join the family by agreeing to the elopement marriage that her boyfriend had suggested. However, before agreeing to the elopement marriage, she had informed her mother-in-law and her father-in-law that she would like to return to school after the birth of the baby; and they in fact agreed to send her to school. Sadly, once the marriage occurred and the baby was born, this did not happen as she went back to living with her mother-in-law.

As a married woman and a mother living with her mother-in-law, life became even more challenging. Mirirai struggled to transition into the role of a mother and a daughter-in-law, not because she was expected to perform chores but that they were chores she could not perform. Having grown up in an urban setting, she was only accustomed to cooking, sweeping the house and doing laundry for herself, her sister and her grandmother. She was not used to fetching firewood and water, farming and washing an entire household’s laundry. She therefore faced a harsh shift from a sheltered life where not much was expected of her. She also soon learnt that she was not mature enough to be married as, at the time, she was unable to stand up for herself with his family:

“When I lived at the farm I lived with my mother-in-law, my nephew and two uncles. I used to wake up most of the time and find my mother-in-law gone so all the chores would be waiting for me. It was hard because at my own [urban] home I was used to waking up at 8 with my grandmother or the maid having done most of the work, so I had to adjust to this. There was no one to teach me, so I had to learn some of the things on the job and now there was more laundry to do which affected my hands.” - Mirirai 18, (16.03.18).

Another issue Mirirai struggled with was the change in diet. Whilst living in her own family's home, Mirirai was accustomed to eating anything she wanted, including the "luxury" goods but, once at the farm, she lived off food like maize and vegetables. She was often accused of overeating even though she was breast feeding and her inability to adjust well to her new diet and life caused her to experience drastic weight loss. Despite this, she put up with this life for about a year and a half because of her desire to make her marriage work, but she eventually had to let go and move on with her life, which is something her mother-in-law had hoped for when she separated Mirirai and her husband. According to her, the only good thing to come out of her marriage was her child. Given her experience of marriage and the hurt she experienced, Mirirai does not see herself getting married again any time in the near future.

Case 13: Sandra, 24

Sandra was born in a small rural town where she lived with both her siblings and her parents at their farm up until her parents passed away (her mother died when she was 11 and her father two years later in 2005). Sandra studied up until grade seven but could go no further as she did not have a birth certificate and therefore could not register for her grade seven exams. Life was extremely difficult without her parents and they became a child-headed household in which she lived with two of her sisters, one older and one younger, while the first born girl worked in Harare. Although they had other relatives, they did not step in to provide care therefore running a household was something that Sandra learnt to do at a young age.

After Sandra stopped going to school her sister, who was now married and still living in Harare, took her in. Sandra worked as a domestic worker in Harare before moving to live with a maternal uncle. While living there, she often entertained advances from a man who was interested in starting a romantic relationship with her, as the idea of having someone to look after her and love her was appealing. One day a visit to this man's home resulted in her finding herself pushed into a marriage, after her uncle became furious that she had been seen visiting a man. After her uncle told her to go back where she was coming from, 16-year-old Sandra had no choice but to comply and the 32-year-old man was more than happy to take her in as his wife. Sandra did not put up much of a fight when her uncle sent her away, as she hoped that this man would be the one to look after her and love her as she was an orphan. Sandra had actually only been at his house initially seeking comfort after an altercation with her uncle, who was in fact verbally and

emotionally abusive. Sadly, from the moment that Sandra entered the union, her relationship consisted of highs and lows, with one low point actually leading to her and her husband breaking up for a number of years before being brought back together by a death in the family and an aunt's intervention.

A day after he had sent her away, her uncle told her to come back home but she refused. This was because she thought that, having been in a man's home for one night, leaving the next day would make her seem as a woman of loose morals. To her delight, a week after she began living with him, he paid *tsvakirai kuno* which was accepted by her uncle. Much to her surprise, her transition into marriage was challenging as she had new responsibilities of being in charge of the meals. This rested on the ability to budget well and plan meals and purchase the necessary food, not only for herself and her husband but for his brother and sister with whom they also lived. Additionally, she soon learnt that her husband was in fact unemployed and had an uncertain future. This added to the difficulties she faced as a young wife as financial matters were a constant source of stress given they were both unemployed:

“This was the first man who had ever pursued me and I had no idea of the types of things one should consider when looking at a man, like his future prospects, financial stability and whether he was working. My lack of maturity put me into an unfavourable situation.”- Sandra 24, (20.05.18).

Matters picked up somewhat when she began working as a domestic worker but she still did not earn enough to live a comfortable life. She fell pregnant at the age of 17 (in 2009) and halfway through her pregnancy her husband (who was still unemployed) was convinced to run away by some of his relatives and went to live in South Africa. Once he was gone, his family (who had initially been quite welcoming) chased her away and so she returned to her rural home where she continued working as a domestic worker. Despite this, she remained grateful for her child who she saw as someone with whom to have life with and share life's burdens. Much to her surprise, after two years, her husband came back with no explanation and accepted his child but made no attempts to mend the marriage. A few months later he called to inform her of a death in his family. When she went to the funeral in 2012, she received counselling from some of his relatives who convinced her to get back together with her husband.

At the time of the interview, Sandra was still with her husband with whom she was raising the two children they have together, a one year five month old child along with their seven-year-old first born. They are currently live in harmony although she complains about them often being ‘on different pages’ instead of working together:

“We do things separately, we don’t plan together and this is sometimes frustrating.” - Sandra 24, (20.05.18).

Despite the highs and lows, Sandra’s only regret was that she had not been properly married as she had not gone through the *kukumbira* channel of entering into a marriage, nor had he paid the bride price. In reflecting more broadly on her marriage:

“Orphan-hood motivates one to enter into a marriage and to stay in the marriage. Some people’s experiences are positive and others are negative. What I know for sure is mine had been a combination of the two but, had it not been for my lack of parents, life would have surely taken me in a different direction.” - Sandra 24, (20.05.18).

Case 14: Vimbai, 18

Vimbai was born in Mabvuku and grew up there with both her parents. Vimbai’s parents were loving and supportive. They had a reasonable combined income and worked hard to ensure the family did not face any scarcity of resources and they managed to put her through school right up until Form Four which she completed in 2017. During the time when she was waiting for her ‘O’ level results, due to influences from friends, she began a sexual relationship with her 23-year-old boyfriend who she had been dating for about a year, and this ultimately resulted in her falling pregnant. After realising that she had fallen pregnant, she was unhappy and struggled to accept it; she even considered terminating the pregnancy but her friends opposed this. Her friends’ opposition coupled with her fear of the procedure’s consequences on her health, resulted in her not going through with the termination. Despite her parents’ insistence that she was too young for marriage and that pregnancy was not a sufficient reason for marriage, Vimbai eloped to her boyfriend’s house under advisement from her paternal aunt. She entered into the union but it only lasted for seven months before they parted ways. She returned to the care of her parents who were more than happy to pull her out of what had become an abusive relationship and provide for her and her child.

Vimbai's elopement resulted in her being put off marriage for good, as she lived under stressful conditions in a house where she looked after four men including her husband. As a pregnant girl, cleaning up after four men and doing all the cooking and laundry, which included washing blankets, was very taxing. Even though money was not much of an issue at the time, Vimbai's living situation left her feeling uncomfortable, stressed and exhausted. As she put it:

“There was no point at all where I was happy within that marriage. As a child who is pregnant in a home, it's difficult if you fall sick because people think you are lying and they keep pushing you, and they take advantage of your age. The worst was the way I was handled; I could be pushed around or deprived of food even though money was readily available.” - Vimbai 18, (20.05.18).

Case 15: Constance, 22

Constance was born in a remote town and grew up with her maternal grandmother. Her parents lived in Harare but her mother gave birth and left her with her grandmother after weaning her. Her father eventually passed away and she moved to live with her mother in Harare. Constance's educational journey came to an end after she wrote her 'O' level exams, as she opted to get married leading to her mother refusing to pay the outstanding fees such that she could collect her exam results. She speaks about what happened as follows:

“We started dating in Form Three when I was 15 and he was 22. My mother didn't want us to be together because she said we were somehow related but he and I used to get along so well so we kept dating. When I finished my 'O' levels my mom wanted to send me back to her rural home to ensure that we didn't end up together. I told my boyfriend and he was convinced the only way we could be together was to get married immediately so that's what we ended up doing. I then didn't manage to collect my exam results because of an outstanding balance that my mother refused to pay and my boyfriend could not afford to pay it.”-Constance 22, (10.07.18).

By the time Constance entered into an elopement marriage, she had been in a relationship with her boyfriend for about a year. Constance had often gotten into trouble with her mother who did not approve of the relationship. She beat Constance in the hopes of keeping them apart and had in fact, as noted, planned on moving Constance to the rural area as a last resort to keeping them

apart. This though is the very issue that led to her early marriage, which was a ploy to ensure Constance's mother would no longer be able to keep the two apart. Upon finding out Constance's mother's plan, her boyfriend, with the assistance of a friend, kept her from going home from his house until it was late enough for Constance to be convinced to stay to avoid another confrontation with her mother and to ensure they stayed together. Constance was easily swayed and she accepted his proposal.

Constance initially lived at her husband's paternal aunt's home as this aunt understood the challenges they had faced as a couple and she also liked Constance and the determination she had shown to be with her nephew. The aunt acted as a "middle man" between the couple and her husband's parents and relatives. She allowed Constance's husband (her nephew) to visit her every weekend. His parents eventually suggested that Constance move into their home but his aunt delayed this move, knowing that Constance's mother would be searching for her at their home. Constance therefore spent three months living with his aunt before secretly moving back to Mabvuku where her husband's family home was:

"When I was preparing to move back to Mabvuku, his parents asked whether I wanted the family to hold a traditional celebration officially welcoming me into their home. But I refused because I knew this would alert my mother of my whereabouts and I did not want this, as I was sure she was still against our relationship." – Constance 22, (10.07.18).

The other major reason Constance's mother disapproved of Constance's relationship was the fact that he could only get seasonal employment, which meant that Constance would probably live a life of financial struggle with her boyfriend being unable to support her sufficiently. This did not seem to be a concern for Constance, who did not mind the idea of not having a particularly lavish life but potentially a life of lack – just so she could be with the man she loved. This decision is not one she regretted as she lived well with her husband and it turned out that, despite her mother's concerns, her husband and his family did provide a better life for her compared to her mother (who was seasonally employed on farms and did not bring much money into the home).

Constance and her husband never got into any serious altercations and, although they would sometimes struggle financially, his family was always available to assist them when times were bad. While her husband had promised to pay the outstanding school fees so that she could collect

her exam results and continue with her education, he never did. Two years later she was pregnant with their first child whom she gave birth to at the age of 18. Constance was pregnant with her second child at the time of the interview. Both pregnancies came with great joy not only for the couple but for her in-laws as well, as her husband is the first born and his parents had no grandchildren before Constance gave birth. Besides loving their grandchildren, Constance's in-laws showed their concern for her even before she entered into the marriage. Before she had even agreed to the marriage, her father-in-law had lovingly warned her of his son's irresponsibility, immaturity and love for women. Going in then she knew to expect these things, but she brushed it off:

“My father-in-law told me that he [my boyfriend] was irresponsible and immature. He often squandered his pay without contributing to household expenses and spent time chasing after women.” – Constance 22, (10.07.18).

The word of caution, although it went unheeded, later came to life as Constance began to see some of the issues herself; but her in-laws played a crucial role in keeping their marriage together and keeping their son from marrying again. The love with which her in-laws treated her was a welcome change from her mother's strict and harsh nature. As she expressed it:

“When he was still young he cheated with other girls. Another girl once showed up at the house but his parents chased her away saying they didn't know her and that they already had a daughter-in-law with whom they were happy... My mother-in-law had previously acknowledged that I was too young to know how to take on the responsibilities of marriage, but she had no problem grooming me into the woman I am today.” - Constance 22, (10.07.18).

Luckily for Constance these issues with her husband did not continue in the long run and, as he grew older, he became more responsible with the use of his income and also stopped coming home at odd hours and entertaining other women. He even raised money to pay for Constance's bride wealth. Although Constance's mother initially refused to accept the bride wealth as she did not support the union, she eventually reached out to Constance's husband so that he could come back and make the payment, most probably because of financial hardships on her end.

Constance's mother-in-law played a crucial role in teaching her how a household is supposed to be run. Some of the lessons she received from her included the importance of respecting her husband's relatives and how to budget so that she could run her household efficiently. These are lessons which Constance believes are essential as one begins a new family, particularly given that in retrospect she views herself as having been immature at the time she was married. With much support given to her on the internal workings of marriage and her experience in doing chores, Constance's main concerns focused on external matters such as watching her friends continuing with their schooling. She regretted being unable to return to school, although she was almost certain that she failed her exams:

“The tough thing about being married young is that you then watch your friends going about their lives and continuing with school which is something that may not be an option for you. Another thing that made my transition to being a wife difficult was the age gap between me and the other daughters-in-law in the extended family. They were not mean or anything but I always felt awkward at family gatherings when we were all called up and it was so obvious standing next to them that I was far younger, a child even. Those were the main challenges.” - Constance 22, (10.07.18).

Though Constance has a good marriage and would not change how she entered into her marriage, she does not encourage early marriage and believes that one should be established first, well-educated and able to make their money. She thus advised:

“Nothing good can come out of early marriage; you start regretting not having done things or having made the wrong decision. I wish I had gotten to finish school up to Form six and done a course so I could be able to establish myself and support my mother freely without any concerns.” - Constance 22, (10.07.18).

Case 16: Thando, 24

Thando is the last of six children born to a farmer and an electrician who lived in Mabvuku. She grew up there with both parents until her mother passed away. Thando's siblings, who are much older, are all now living in various high density suburbs including Rugare, Epworth and Mabvuku. They were all educated up until Form Four but are mostly unemployed. Thando,

however, only managed to study until Form Three as the family ran out of money after her father who was now the sole breadwinner stopped working. She then began working as a domestic worker and was able to provide for herself, but she eventually gave up work after she was raped by her employer's friend while on the job. Her lack of employment sent her back to her childhood home where she lived under the care of her father, who was struggling financially and often unable to provide food. The combination of the continued threat of poverty and hunger, alongside the promise of a better life and the building of a new family with the man she loved, saw her accepting her 25-year-old boyfriend's proposal to start a family with him. Unlike 23 of the other participants, Thando informed her relatives of the proposal and her intention to accept it. Although they were all aware of the laws around child marriage and initially tried to talk her out of it, they eventually accepted it and were supportive given the limited options with which she was faced. Her relatives even accompanied her to his house for an official 'hand over' even though no money had been paid.

Thando was accepted and welcomed by her husband's family and her expectations of marriage were realised. Given that Thando grew up carrying out chores in the home and also had vast experience working as a domestic worker, her transition was smooth as far as working within the home was concerned. Thando has always been happy in her marriage and spoke of her husband as accommodating and fair. He allows her to be herself and her life after marriage has proven to be better than before.

When she initially arrived at his home Thando had to share a room with his paternal aunt because her husband did not have a room of his own. This time of sharing fostered good relationships with the aunt and other relatives who lived there. These same relatives were very supportive when she had a still birth at the age of 17. By the time she gave birth after her second pregnancy, she was living alone with her husband as the others had moved out.

Thando has no regrets regarding how her marriage unfolded and the only thing she wishes for is the opportunity to start a small business using one of her many skills. As a young married woman, Thando managed to take on some courses through Mavambo and Yaz which are NGOs that are geared towards empowering young people. In 2017 she completed a hotel and catering course along with a baking course. Before that, she had successfully completed an entrepreneurial course, all with the support and encouragement of her husband. According to

Thando, the only negative thing about their marriage is that he sometimes works out of town and does not come home for long periods. Having interacted with other young married women, Thando though advised against rushing into marriage:

“Don’t rush into marriage if your life is stable or you are in a good place; you may end up with a stressful person who makes you regret your decision. Stay in school and make a good life for yourself because if you have no education you can end up with an educated man who will be-little you.” - Thando 24, (06.11.17).

Case 17: Kuda, 32

Kuda grew up just outside Harare with her step mother and her father as her parents were divorced. She initially lived with her mother then she relocated to her father’s home. While living with her father, she was mistreated by her step-mother who clearly favoured her own children and treated them differently, making sure they grew up into well-rounded individuals. Funding issues forced Kuda to drop out of school when she was in grade seven (at 12 years old). She sat at home unemployed for four years before deciding to venture out on her own in search of a better life, which turned out to be in the form of a flight marriage (*kutizira*):

“I was not prepared for marriage because my step mother never groomed me the way she did her own children. Instead of being taught to carry out household chores such as cooking, washing dishes or doing the laundry, I was always sent to collect firewood even though I was too young for this. I even sustained a back injury at some point because of the weight of the firewood”. – Kuda, 32 (22.08.17).

When Kuda ran away from home at the age of 16, she had to rely on her neighbour’s grooming as, after she got married, she still wanted to behave as a teenage girl, playing outside till late. Although she lacked maturity initially, she lived well with her husband for the first three years of their marriage. When she fell pregnant in 2006 at the age of 20 her husband’s behaviour changed. He began cheating on her and it escalated up until he abandoned her and went to live in Mozambique where he eventually passed away most likely due to an AIDS related illness. As she put it:

“Although I didn’t know much about marriage or relationships when I got married, I was certain I would be able to keep my husband happy because I had attended chinamwari lessons at 14. They teach you how to satisfy a husband but I soon realised that sex is not all it takes to keep a man.” – Kuda, 32 (22.08.17).

At the end of it all, Kuda ended up regretting her decision to get married and now she hopes to find a job so she is able to send her child to school:

“All in all I would say my life was better before I got married. I didn’t know child marriage was illegal before I got married and I ended up with a man who infected me with HIV as he failed to disclose his status to me.” – Kuda, 32 (22.08.17).

Case 18: Rufaro, 20

Growing up Rufaro lived with her mother and step-father until her mother, who was the breadwinner, passed away in 2013 when Rufaro was in Form Three (around 15 years old). Not wanting to be a burden to her step-father who treated her well up until that point, she decided to move out and start working. While working, Rufaro managed to track down her father’s family whom she then first met in 2015. Unfortunately, they were quick to turn their backs on her later in the year when she fell pregnant out of wedlock. Feeling abandoned with nowhere else to go, and with a baby on the way, Rufaro turned to her boyfriend who took her in.

At that point they had been in a relationship for a year and what began as cohabiting soon turned into a ‘union in progress’ when her boyfriend paid part of the bride wealth to her family. This was done in an attempt to mend Rufaro’s relationship with her family and to get them to recognise him as a son-in-law and their child as legitimate. He also paid *masungiro* which allowed Rufaro to return to her family to await the birth of her child. While the very people who had initially disowned her accepted the payment and acknowledged her boyfriend as their son-in-law, the relationship between Rufaro and her relatives remained tense but this did not affect her marriage. She and her husband lived a quiet and happy life together with no financial or marital problems. Rufaro’s husband treated her well and provided for her.

She transitioned smoothly into the role of a wife as she had grown up performing household chores including cooking, fetching water, cleaning and doing laundry. According to her, this

equipped her for the duties she carried out as a wife. However, despite her smooth transition, she found the financial responsibility and providing for a household more than somewhat challenging. Sadly, Rufaro's happiness and her marriage were extremely short lived as her husband ran away and left her alone with their child soon after she returned from giving birth. This came as a shock to her as everything had been going well.

Because they were together for only seven months, part of which she was with her family, not many details were provided about her experience of marriage. What is clear though is that, as shown below, the turn of events left her with no fight as far as attempting to cling onto a man who did not seem to want her:

“After I had given birth and came back home to my husband he just up and left and didn't come back. At some point I asked some of his relatives about his whereabouts and they said he was still in the city but I didn't have the heart to go and search for him so I just left it like that.” - Rufaro 20, (08.04.18).

Despite the unexpected way in which her marriage ended, Rufaro spoke of the period with fondness and stated that life as a married woman had been so much better than the life she had lived after her mother died. She had had the opportunity to have a family of her own and, for a brief period, she came to experience love and normalcy. To Rufaro, living a comfortable life alone was dull in comparison to being a part of a family. It is therefore not much of a surprise that, left alone with a child to take care of, she soon found herself living with another man a few months after her baby was born.

Case 19: Chipu, 21

Chipu was born in a high density residential area and grew up in two separate households with paternal aunts as her mother passed away in her infancy. Chipu never got the opportunity to attend school as there was no one who could fund her education as she had never met her father, and nor was she aware of his whereabouts. Living in a farming district with her aunt, she watched her cousins being spoilt and getting an education while her aunt treated her badly and made her work in what she considered as slave-like conditions. Chipu played the role of a domestic worker in her aunt's big family where she felt taken advantage of because of her age

and her status as an orphan. She was responsible for sweeping inside the house and the yard, fetching water, cooking by the fire and gardening. None of the other girls, grandchildren and cousins did any work. Chipo eventually ran away at the age of 14, deciding instead to work as a domestic worker for pay in a nearby town. Sadly, Chipo had no job security and bounced from one job to the next until she decided to get married to her 26-year-old boyfriend.

At 17, Chipo entered into an elopement marriage and lived happily with her husband for some time. Given the heavy chores she had been expected to carry out at a young age and her job as a domestic worker, she was able to carry out domestic chores with ease once she was married. The only issue with which she struggled, as she took on her new role, was no longer being able to engage in children's activities such as games with peers. She had to accept that she was now a wife and later a mother.

Once married, Chipo got along well with her in-laws who seemed to love her and listened to her problems when she went to them for guidance. Chipo never had to worry about finances as her husband often had piece jobs that kept them afloat; in fact, he even prevented her from working given the difficulties she faced in holding a job. Again, sadly, the situation changed dramatically in 2017 when her husband was arrested in October and spent four months in prison. She was pregnant when this happened. At the same time, the landlord who was renting out the place where she and her husband were living asked her to leave as she could no longer live there since her husband had been arrested. She found a place to live alone and did so for a brief period before realising it was not an ideal situation, so she then went to his parent's house and suddenly realised that his family had turned against her. By the time her husband returned home in February, his family was actively standing between them as they clearly no longer wanted them to be together. They began trying to convince him that the child was in fact not his, as her pregnancy looked too small to be from before he was locked up. The family went a step further and moved him to a different town. Soon after this, his cousin sent her money so she could move out of her in-law's house. By the time she gave birth she was living alone working piece jobs. She sent word to her husband's cousin and, upon hearing that the child had been born, her husband came to see her and the child, and that is the last time she ever saw him. She was 18 when this happened.

When Chipo's marriage began, she was convinced that life as a married woman was far better than as a single woman, given the struggle she faced in taking care of herself and the lack of a supportive family unit. But, by the time her marriage ended in February 2018, her views had changed:

"Looking at the life I lived after I was married compared to my life before, I could see that they are completely different. Before I was married I was very poor and life was extremely difficult most of the times, so marriage truly did seem like a good option. We broke up in February 2018 but before then it was good. I could talk to his parents and they supported me, treating me as their own". - Chipo 21, (21.02.18).

Ultimately his family later played a role in ending their marriage even though the couple did not officially break up. Even though the end of her marriage left her as a single mother, she is grateful for her daughter and sees it as a good thing as she has someone with whom to talk share life. She sees herself remarrying when her child is older.

Case 20: Lisa, 23

Lisa, who didn't know her father until she was 12, grew up in Mabvuku with her grandparents as her mother had remarried. Throughout her early life, both her parents did not seem to pay much attention to her and also made no effort to provide for her, especially after her mother entered into her third marriage. Her mother went out of her way to look after her husband and her new family at the expense of financial resources, time and attention directed towards Lisa. Lisa ended up living with her father when she was 17 and this is when she learnt that her father had in fact remarried as well. Lisa was treated poorly by her step-mother as she disliked Lisa's mother, who she claimed had entered into a relationship with her husband while she had gone for temporary teaching. Lisa's step-mother was strict and her father also made it clear that he was not interested in raising Lisa. Due to these conditions, she only managed to stay with them for a single school term before she returned to Mabvuku, where she stayed with her grandmother once again while completing her 'O' levels. During this period, she met a car salesman with whom she started a relationship and this soon led to her falling pregnant and eventually led to her marriage. Lisa's narration of her life was centred on the various forms of abuse she had encountered.

At the age of 17, Lisa fell pregnant after she was raped by her 27-year-old boyfriend who had lured her to his house under the guise of meeting his parents. Lisa believes that he took advantage of her young age as he had forcefully broken her virginity a week earlier after asking her to come and visit him:

“When I got there I noticed that his father was not home. His mother who was in the house when I arrived left us alone, saying she was going to the nearby shops to buy some juice and biscuits for me. While she was gone my boyfriend forced himself onto me.”- Lisa 23, (16.03.18)

On the first occasion, she felt she had no option but to comply with his demands as she had no money to return home and had also borrowed money to get to his house, about which her boyfriend said he would reimburse her. After the second assault, he instructed her not to return to her own home; but, when his mother returned home, she made sure that Lisa went back to her house. Having been negatively affected by these events, Lisa was not in touch with him again until she realised that she was pregnant. He initially denied the pregnancy so she continued to live at her grandmother’s house up until the baby was born. Lisa began working in a cellphone accessory shop so she could provide for her baby but, some months after her son’s birth, her mother’s brother showed up. He kicked her out of her grandmother’s house, in the same breath telling her that she could pack her bags and start a life at the family’s rural home. Having been neglected and left without any other option, Lisa began to make arrangements to relocate.

Upon hearing of the pending move, Lisa’s former boyfriend then claimed the child as his own and, despite not wanting to be with Lisa, he brought her to his childhood home so he could be close to his child. This was done against his mother’s wishes and Lisa was treated badly the entire time she was there. Besides the difficulties she faced dealing with her new family, Lisa found it fairly easy to do what was required of her as a wife as she had grown up carrying out various household duties.

For the first four months of her stay, Lisa’s husband was unemployed so his parents, who were quite well off, supported him financially. She also sold tuck-shop items to make money for their upkeep. Her husband kept to himself and did not have much to do with her. Despite her attempts

to make a good impression, his family was far from welcoming and she often overheard them speaking ill of her:

“One day when I had gone to use the bathroom I heard my mother-in-law saying ‘I wonder where that girl has gone now, if only she knew we don’t want her here and are only looking for a way to get the child away from her’”. Lisa 23, (16.03.18).

Far from defending her and making her feel welcome for at least the sake of their child, her husband was no different. Five months down the line, when he finally got a job, the abuse intensified, both physical and emotional abuse which was coupled with a blatant disregard of his marriage. At times he would not come back home and he also began cheating and would openly carry condoms as he was leaving the house:

“After he got a job... he was also interested in sugar mamas and he would be sending messages to them in my presence telling various women how he missed them. He also had inappropriate conversations with other women on Facebook as if he was unmarried. It really bothered me that he did it right where I was like I didn’t matter”. –Lisa 23, (16.03.18).

During these abusive moments, his mother supported him and made it obvious that the only way Lisa could escape from the abuse was if she left their home. Her husband also denied the cheating to his parents and, after a confrontation that occurred with both his parents there, her father-in-law asked Lisa whether she wanted to leave. She agreed but, when the time to leave came, her father-in-law was reluctant to allow her to leave with the child. He became violent, grabbing the child from her and locking her in one of the bedrooms. When she eventually found the door open, she made her way to the local police station and reported the beatings. The police took her father-in-law into custody but advised her to just exit the marriage amicably instead of filing a case against the family; so this is what she then did. After leaving their home, she returned to Mabvuku. Even having faced such an unpleasant situation, she would like to remarry one day.

Case 21: Mavis, 20

Mavis grew up with her mother in a small settlement area just outside of Harare as her father had passed away. She lived comfortably and noted that there was never any lack in their home and *“it was as good as having both parents to provide for us”*. From the age of about five, Mavis helped her mother around the house. She stepped into the role of caregiver more fully at the age of 11 as her mother became a cross-border trader and was therefore hardly home. Mavis then became the parental figure for her two siblings who were in need of supervision. While Mavis was waiting for her ‘O’ Level results, at the age of 17 she fell pregnant. She had been dating her 24-year-old boyfriend for about two months. Despite this short relationship, when her mother found out that she was pregnant and the father of the child was willing to accept responsibility for the child, Mavis’s mother asked Mavis’s aunt to escort her to his home in the form of an elopement marriage. Both *tsvakirai kuno* and *masungiro* were paid soon after this. Mavis acknowledged knowing that child marriage was illegal but took responsibility for the events, saying it was her own misbehaviour that led her into that situation. As she indicated:

“To be honest I knew about the dangers of teenage pregnancy and about contraception but I thought it would be very hard for me to fall pregnant because I always have very heavy and painful periods” - Mavis20, (08.07.18).

Mavis’s husband was loving during the relationship and this carried on after they got married. He remained loving even after she began living with him and he took on the leadership role. He refers to himself as the man of the house and makes sure that she has nothing to worry about as far as providing for their child is concerned. He has lived up to his promises of providing a good life as he has maintained the lifestyle to which she was used accustomed. Although Mavis spoke of her marriage and her husband fondly, with no trace of regrets, she did mention an incident of cheating by her husband along with the various disadvantages that come with child marriage:

“Getting married when you are young has many disadvantages and few advantages. Sometimes when you are married to an older man, he can take advantage of you because you are younger. Like in my case, I feel that my husband sometimes does that because I am younger than he is. We have a seven-year age difference and sometimes he doesn’t listen to what I say. He says I’m young and he just expects me to be the one listening to him

because he is wiser. But you will be living well together, getting along despite the fact that there are challenges that may arise” – Mavis 20, (08.07.18).

Mavis did in fact face some challenges in her marriage but she made it very clear that she had no intention of giving up on her marriage because of the wonderful life they lived together as a family. Besides him refusing to enrol her in a cooking course as he insisted she needed to take care of their child instead of worrying about bringing in an additional income, he was (as noted) also unfaithful in their marriage. He had initially denied it and only asked for forgiveness when he realised she had truly caught him.

“My marriage has been good. The great thing about it is my husband loves me and he loves our child. When I gave birth our joy was amplified, even his parents love this family... My husband is always happy, he is gentle and even when he is angry he doesn't like confrontation. Yes, men have a problem with cheating but if they respect you its better. All men cheat, it happens and it may bother you sometimes. It hurts but these things happen.” - Mavis 20, (08.07.18).

Speaking of her transition into marriage, Mavis indicated that she did not face much of a challenge even though there is a significant difference between playing the role of a parental figure in a home where there is actually a mother to fall back on and being the mother of the house – the one the family looks to in order to solve various problems in the home, and to make sure everyone is fed and taken care of, even when money is sometimes low. Looking back, Mavis views her positive attitude and the way she embraced the idea of growth, maturity and learning to deal with issues alone without her mother as being an important factor that helped her step into her marriage with ease. This also played a role in her willingness to submit to her husband and let go of her old life. In this way, she could adjust to a quiet and private life at home instead of spending time out of the house with her friends and partying, which are all things her husband does not approve of. She reflected on this as follows:

“When we started dating he made it clear that he did not approve of my lifestyle. I used to be very naughty but as a married woman I had to change. I'm glad that the change wasn't too difficult because I cut ties with my old friends who may have made the switch to being

a wife difficult... The set-up in my new neighbourhood is also that of separate yards so there is increased privacy and limited interaction with others.” - Mavis 20, (08.07.18).

Because of the changes she made to her life, Mavis speaks of her marriage as going strong. Her husband recently accepted a job offer in South Africa and they are planning on her and their child joining him once he has settled into his new life there.

Case 22: Amy, 19

Amy grew up with both parents but her father was sometimes absent as he had another wife with whom he sometimes lived. Although her father was employed as a mechanic he did not provide for Amy and was often uninvolved in her upbringing. By the time Amy was in Form Four, the cost of her education and upbringing had become a burden on her mother who was a nursery school teacher. Her mother could no longer afford to do everything on her own as Amy's younger sister was starting secondary school as well. Amy therefore stopped school before she had written her 'O' level exams which left room for her sister to obtain at least two years of a secondary school education.

Amy was taken in by a relative under the guise of intending to fund Amy's 'O' Levels but, instead, the relative treated her badly and had her working in her house as a domestic worker. Amy then ran away and returned to her mother's house where she was provided for again. During this period, Amy (who was 17 at the time) began dating a 23-year-old man whom she eventually lost her virginity to four months down the line. Having strong beliefs about the importance of virginity and the decrease in a woman's value once this was gone, she refused to leave his house the next time she was there and he accepted her as his wife. Amy's husband paid *tsvakirai kuno* for her two weeks later and, within three months, he had paid the full bride price although all parties involved were aware of the laws surrounding child marriage.

Amy was happy when she initially entered into her marriage and her husband treated her well, with their age difference of six years not being much of a factor. She fell pregnant within the first few months and gave birth in their first year together. Unfortunately, seven months into her pregnancy, her husband's work contract came to an end and they began living off handouts. This continued until their child was nearly a year old as they were both unemployed. After he got his

current job, matters began looking up again and he enrolled in a diploma in Diesel Plant Fitting. Amy supports his studies and they agreed to put a hold on having a second child so her husband can concentrate on furthering his education. While her experience carrying out chores helped her in her new role as mother of her house, she was not well prepared for the roles she had to take of budgeting and taking care of a husband and baby as well. This made her transition a little challenging but she still referred to it as manageable.

Whilst life in this family is a happy one, Amy faced challenges as his wife, as his relatives felt that she was too young. Luckily Amy and her husband lived alone with their child so she avoided interacting with his relatives often, particularly her husband's sister and mother who actively attempt to break the two up. In this respect, she highlighted:

“At some point they tried so hard to break us up. They began telling my husband lies that I behave badly and disrespect them, which he was not impressed by. I don't know how he could even think I am capable of that” - Amy 22, (16.03.18).

Unfortunately, Amy could not outrun this negativity forever as her and her husband ended up having to live with his family from the time he lost his job. At the time of the interview, they were still living with his mother and four other relatives. All these relatives do not accept her and have made it clear that they do not like her neither do they want her. She is not sure of the reason behind this but has a hunch that it has to do with her age as they sometimes speak of this negatively. One of Amy's biggest concerns is the effect of family interference in their relationship. While her husband loves and supports her, even to the extent of wanting to fund her education, he often listens to what his mother has to say about his marriage which leads to marital issues. She is therefore currently pushing for them to revert to living alone as she believes the distance from her in-laws will be good for their marriage.

All in all, while Amy has a good marriage and transitioned fairly easily into the role of a wife, she believes she got married too young and should have waited until she was above 18 so she could be more mature. In giving advice to others, she stated:

“One lesson I would like to share with girls is for them to study hard. My mother-in-law looks down on me because I never finished high school. I wish I had gotten the opportunity

to even go to night school so I could complete my ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels and even get a job before I got married.” – Amy 22, (16.03.18).

Case 23: Violet, 56

Violet was born in Mabvuku where she lived with her parents and studied up until grade seven. At this point her parents could no longer fund her education. Her sister, who was a teacher, took her in under the pretence of wanting to enrol her in secondary school but she ended up actually working for her as a domestic worker in Kambuzuma. Her job included staying home with her sister’s children while she went to work. During this time that she was taught how to cook and carry out basic chores, as her parents had not expected her to do these things because they still viewed her as a child. In her spare time at her sister’s place, she would lie about her whereabouts and go for concerts with friends. At one of these outings, she met and started dating her first boyfriend. They got along well and she would often visit him at his house.

One day at the age of 17, she went in search of her boyfriend but found he was not home. On her way back to her house, she bumped into one of his friends who then raped her. This 19-year-old boy had a muscular build and he threatened to harm her if she did not comply. This incident resulted in her falling pregnant and her family responded by taking her to the culprit’s house and demanding that he take responsibility for both her and the baby by marrying her. Although his family initially refused because the boy was of a young age, they eventually gave in and the two began to live together in his parent’s house. Even though their marriage was dysfunctional as he was unfaithful and would constantly abuse her in various ways, Violet admitted that she did become attached to him and developed some sort of romantic feelings towards him. Up until she had her first child, she would run back to her family during hard times (for example, because of infidelity) and they would take her in; but she would soon be back with him so they eventually stopped intervening. Her father-in-law, who was also constantly trying to get his son a job but eventually gave up, then sent Violet to live at their rural home as her father-in-law could not continue looking after his son’s entire family. This is how she tells the story:

“When we started living together, we lived in his childhood home. His father was well off and sometimes he would try and assist by providing for us. He was also always trying to find my husband a job but he would never show up for the interviews. Instead he would

spend all the money for transport on alcohol; I don't know what his issue was. He also cheated on me here and there and I would run away to my parents but he would come and convince me to go back. Things would be fine for a year or two then we'd be back in the same boat." – Violet 56, (08.07.18).

After a short time living at their rural home, Violet briefly moved back to Harare and was once again in her father-in-law's house. But after she gave birth to her second child, her father-in-law then suggested she go back to the rural area where she continued to live until after she had given birth to her third child. At this point, the cheating was so bad that at times when she went to his house in Harare she would find a woman living there and she would only leave upon Violet's return. While living at her father-in-law's rural home, she struggled to scrape together money for fertiliser for the crops she was planting, as well as for food and other basics for herself and the children as the crop yield tended to be poor. Violet eventually got fed up with living a tough life in the rural area, which is when she decided to make use of her certifications to find a job. She soon found one which landed her back in Harare where she then had to live with her husband so that she could save up money for her son to go into Form One.

Violet was physically abused throughout her marriage and the abuse peaked when she began working after the birth of their third child. On nights when he came home very drunk and confrontational, she would sometimes hide in a neighbour's yard:

"I had gone for culinary training so I managed to get a job as a chef. I use to get paid weekly on a Friday and I would have to give him money to go to the bar. At times he would beat me and take all the money leaving me with no money to even buy food and clothes for the children. Yes, I had three children with him but it's not because I truly loved him; there just seemed to be nothing else I could do, that's what was there"-Violet 56, (08.07.18).

The abuse became so visible because of the bruises on her body that her employers asked her about it. After opening up to them about her husband's behaviour, they helped her to open a case against him and the court awarded a peace order, along with which the marriage came to an end. However, to this day, Violet carries the scars from that marriage and blames her sister for how her life turned out. As she puts it:

“To this day I blame my sister. Had she not lied that I was going to school I may have been able to make another plan to continue with school so that I wasn’t idle; this is why I ended up being involved with boys. I wouldn’t have had time for distractions[if I was at school].”
-Violet 56, (08.07.18).

Case 24: Cleo, 22

Cleo grew up in the care of her mother in a high density residential area. Her mother did sterling work as sole provider and, although they had a few moments of hardship, they lived a decent life. Her mother managed to put her through school up until Form Four but then failed to raise the money that Cleo needed to register for a hair dressing course she wanted to take. When Cleo was 17, her mother found out that she had spent the night at her boyfriend’s house and so her mother sent her back there. Although she tried to resist her mother, she ended up leaving home and moving in with her boyfriend. At that point they had been dating for close to a year and he was now 22 years old. Cleo soon fell pregnant and she was excited about becoming a mother; unfortunately, when the baby was full term, she had a still birth. This did not affect their marriage negatively and two years into their union her husband paid half of the bride wealth.

Cleo seamlessly switched to carrying out chores in her new home, but she also admitted that the transition into marriage as a whole was a somewhat difficult because, at times, she struggled to respect her husband and carry herself in the way a wife is expected to:

“When you are now married, how you behave needs to change. You are expected to be submissive and respect your husband. Also there are a lot of rules such as you can no longer come and go as you please and maybe you’re then not allowed to wear trousers. You know, things like that.” -Cleo 24, (13.06.18).

Despite all this, Cleo described the experience of marriage as *“not too bad”* as she did not have many problems with her husband. However, even though there were some good times in her marriage, her narration of the five years during which the couple was married zoned in on the fighting and the abuse, which often stemmed from his issues with jealousy and his desire to control her. It is these issues, along with his tendency to blow things out of proportion, which led

to the dissolution of their marriage in December 2017. She reflected upon her marriage in this way:

“In the beginning things were great. He worked hard and he met all my needs. Everything I asked for he would get for me; we even began preparing for the baby just three months after I found out[I was pregnant]. From nowhere he developed a habit of lying and money became hard to come by as he stopped going to work; he refused to be productive and would brush aside any attempts to help him get a job. At times my mother would have to send money to us; that’s how bad it got. He’d turn down job offers and I ended up braiding hair to bring in money... at the end of it all, I just didn’t want to live with a man I’m afraid of and can’t speak to because of his potential response.” – Cleo 22, (13.06.18).

Looking back at her marriage, Cleo does not see herself ever going back to her husband even though they did not officially end the marriage. However, even if she could, she would not want to change the way she entered into a marriage, and she believes that sometimes early marriage can actually provide one with a better life. Remarrying is an option for her but only far in the future; for now, her priority is on raising the child she then gave birth to at the age of 21.

Case 25: Mercy, 42

Mercy was born in Tafara where she attended school and lived with her parents up until the age of 17. She grew up in a large household with five older brothers and a sister. Being the youngest, Mercy was spoilt and managed to get away with hardly doing any house work and always having her way. Mercy attended school up until Form Four, after which she then got married soon after she turned 17. Mercy had been dating her boyfriend for a year by time they got married. He was a student teacher at the time and was 22. She noted her parents’ displeasure:

“My parents were not happy with my decision to get married. They had hoped that after my ‘O’ Level I would maybe continue to ‘A’ level or do something else that I could then use as a foundation for my future career. They also knew the challenges in a marriage and believed I was not yet old enough to handle these.” – Mercy 42, (10.07.18).

When the bride wealth was paid, her father and her uncles were there to accept the payment. At that point, they had realised there was no point of arguing because Mercy would have gone ahead with it anyway, so they may as well accept the money. On her husband’s side, only his

mother was involved as she had separated from his father who had then started another family. She was supportive and so had no problem with her son's desire to marry Mercy. Although Mercy's husband was based at an out-of-town teacher's college at the time, they decided to rent a small room in Mabvuku as both their families would not support them in their childhood homes (given they had decided to embark on an adult's journey). At that time, Mercy's father managed to get her a job as a secretary at the construction company where he was employed. Although she had no skills, she received training from the owner. Her husband encouraged her to keep that job so she had something to do and also brought in an income.

Mercy spoke highly about her marriage and the relationship she has had with her husband over the years. However, she also admits to having rushed into marriage which lost her the opportunity to build up her own life. These are some of the issues she sometimes thinks about and looks back on but not in a doleful way:

"I'm still married to my husband and I'm extremely happy; we're such good friends and that's the way it's been right from the word go. In the beginning it was extremely exciting. I was in love and, in looking back, I see that the time I should have been at school I was up to no good. I should have stayed in school and gotten some sort of higher qualification. Even looking back at the early days of my marriage, there were times I could have actually gone back to school or done some courses or something but I didn't. When I eventually thought about it, there were now many challenges such as children. Now I feel too old to be trying to do anything as I've been out of school for long [laughs]." – Mercy 42, (10.07.18).

Mercy gave birth to a boy when she was 18, then a girl when she was 24. Given they had one of each gender, they then decided to stop having children. But, as their children grew older and approached the age of moving out of the house, Mercy decided to add one more and she gave birth to a boy when she was 35:

"When your kids start growing up and you start thinking of how bored you will be once they leave the house, as a woman something happens inside. I figured I had to have another child. I didn't even tell my husband because he would have opposed it given how old our other children were. Further, by the time a new born would be grown up, we would

be quite old ourselves and it would look funny so I only told him well into the pregnancy. Surprisingly he was excited and also said he was looking forward to having a child around as the house was becoming too quiet.” -Mercy 42, (10.07.18).

As a young married woman, Mercy found that her socio-economic standing stayed roughly the same. She did not have to adjust her way of life to suit a lower level of income compared to when she still lived with her parents, as both her and her husband were employed and this helped things balance out.

Looking back at the early days of her marriage, Mercy notes that she was lacking in maturity especially in the area of decision making and looking after a new born. She reflected on these challenges:

“I would have truly struggled if I did not live close to my parents. After the birth of my first child, I went to live at my parent’s house for a month and my mother showed me how to care for my baby. When I returned to my home, my husband would make sure he’d come home early from work to help with doing things such as bathing the baby as I was still unable to do it alone... Learning to become a good wife and mother truly depends on the people surrounding you, how supportive and helpful they are and whether you yourself are willing and able to learn what is required of you. If you catch on fast it works in your favour.” -Mercy 42, (10.07.18).

4.3 Conclusion

The way in which humans live their lives is often complex and messy, with what seem to be well thought-out decisions sometimes leading people into compromising situations, and with sometimes rash and unplanned ones leading to somewhat pleasant surprises. This chapter sought to display the dynamic, unique and yet intertwined experiences that young girls have throughout their lives, leading up to the point of marriage and thereafter its dissolution in some cases. From these stories, it can be seen how child marriage comes to exist in many different ways and the various manners in which girls play out their roles in these unions. The next step then is to analyse these experiences and clearly tease out the different themes embedded within the evidence, and this is precisely what the following chapter aims to do.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF CHILD MARRIAGE EXPERIENCES –THE GOOD, THE TOLERABLE AND THE UGLY

5.1 Introduction

When studying the lives of women who were married before their 18th birthday, it is often expected that their “descriptions of marriage are intricately bound to the circumstances leading up to the marriage” (Hodzi, 2014: 17). It is therefore expected that a child bride who entered a marriage willingly as a flight marriage or elopement-marriage for example will describe it differently compared to someone who was raped and forced into marriage. However, my research shows that sometimes the circumstances leading up to the marriage may not align with the actual experiences during marriage. Even those who willingly eloped, as did most of my participants, can have negative experiences and negative narrations of their marriage. Similarly, those who were ‘forced’ into marriage by their families may in fact have positive narrations.

Without neglecting the very real negative consequences of child marriage as highlighted by my participants, in this chapter I draw attention to the various dimensions of child marriage, a task which also includes unpacking various themes that do not necessarily paint child marriage in a negative light. Before exploring these key themes which emerge from my participants’ experiences, I spend some time on the categorisation of the experiences of child marriage as negative, mixed or positive. In the last two sections, I then turn towards a brief narration of what life after marriage looks like for former child brides, before ending the chapter with a discussion on the construction of childhood.

5.2 Differentiating child bride experiences

Existing literature on the experience of child marriage by girls in Zimbabwe points towards physical and sexual abuse, emotional and verbal abuse, and financial abuse as being core components of their experience. These themes are often placed alongside the negative consequences of child marriage, which in the Zimbabwean case are identified as the halting of a girl’s education, the increased exposure to HIV and the dangers of early child bearing. While all

these risks are indeed real, my data shows that there is more to the experience of child marriage than these negative outcomes.

As researchers, it is important for us to acknowledge that girls who are married before the age of 18 go through a range of various experiences which should not be automatically placed into a box which leads us to view them as having suffered throughout their marriages or as having been ‘victims’ of child marriage. To truly understand the experience of child marriage and bring about meaningful social change to address the underlying issues, we need to understand the various possible ways in which experiences can play out, and to listen to the voices of those who know best the regrets of child marriage (if any) and the reasons that placed and kept them in these unions.

Along with exploring the negative experiences of child marriage, this section also presents alternative experiences of child marriage as categorised by the participants themselves. Cases of child marriage below are labelled as having been negative experiences, mixed experiences or positive experiences. This categorisation is based on how participants themselves classified their unions.

5.2.1 Negative experiences

Nine participants reported having negative experiences of their marriage. Amongst these participants were experiences of poverty, cheating, varying types of abuse by husbands and in-laws, and HIV in one case. In the main, these marriages lasted from a few months up to three years, depending on the type of abuse experienced. At the time of the interviews, only Rati was still married with two children. The table below (Table 4) shows the various issues faced and the length of the marriage.

Although Kuda, Rati, Pamela, Vimbai and Sophia’s husbands took them into their homes, one could argue that these girls were forced on the men in various ways, so that negative responses in the long run can be expected. Kuda ran away to her husband to escape from neglect; Rati and Vimbai pushed themselves into marriage after falling pregnant, with Vimbai’s case being the result of advice given by her aunt; Pamela ran away to her husband to escape from poverty. For Sophia to enter her first marriage she was sent back to her boyfriend’s house after her mother had had enough of her absence in the home and the second marriage she ran away to her

boyfriend after having been back in her mother’s house. In all cases, the husbands themselves had made no commitment to these women, neither had they given the impression of wanting to enter into a union (such as marriage) or even being ready for it. These ‘forced’ marriages ended quite terribly in some cases with Kuda contracting HIV from her husband before he fled to Mozambique, leaving her alone with a child. Pamela was also abandoned by her husband just after she had given birth at the age of 17. Vimbai and Rati’s fate it seems was not as terrible. Vimbai finally abandoned her marriage and gave in to her parent’s pleas to return to their care after spending seven months being treated as more of a slave than as a wife or daughter-in-law. Sophia had ended up leaving her first abusive marriage and landed in a second where her husband abandoned her while she was pregnant. Rati remained married but just complained of being trapped in a mediocre life. These instances perhaps reflect the men’s lack of preparation and desire to become husbands and fathers.

Table 4: Key Issues Underlying Negative Experiences of Marriage

| Name and age at marriage | Poverty | Cheating | Abuse by Husband | Abuse by in-laws | Marital status |
|--------------------------|---------|----------|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Rati, 14 | | | | | Married 11 years |
| Pamela, 14 | | | | | Separated after 3 years |
| Sophia, 14 | | | Physical | | Separated (twice) in under a year |
| Sally, 15 | | | Emotional | Emotional and verbal | Separated after 2 years |
| Mirirai, 16 | | | | Emotional, deprived of food, overworked | Separated after 2 years |
| Vimbai, 16 | | | Overworked, deprived of food | Overworked, deprived of food | Separated in under a year |
| Kuda, 16 | | | | | Separated after 4 years |
| Lisa, 17 | | | Verbal, emotional, physical | Verbal, emotional | Separated after 1 year |
| Violet, 17 | | | Physical, verbal | | Separated after 14 years |

In the case of Violet, Lisa and Mirirai, strong indicators of upcoming trouble were present in the fact that their children’s fathers initially refused to take responsibility for the girls and their

children; and the boys' mothers backed them in this saying that, even if the children were theirs, they were too young to marry. While I do not know of the push factor that eventually led to Violet being taken into the home, Mirirai's husband tried to get her to abort on three occasions before finally giving in after he paid for a procedure she talked her way out of with the practitioner. For Lisa, her husband only took her in after her relatives began planning on neglecting her and her child in the rural area. The reluctance with which these girls entered the home can thus be said to be reflected in the way they were treated going forward.

With reference to Violet and Lisa, who actually ended up in marriages with partners who had raped them, one could say it comes as no surprise that their experiences were negative. The same way in which they had been violated by these men before marriage is the same way in which these men continued to 'dish out' various forms of abuse during their marriage. Given the low level of regard for these girls and their feelings and well-being while they were still dating, their partners were also unfaithful as husbands and, in both cases, the abuse and cheating led to the breakdown of these marriages. For Lisa, this happened much sooner than for Violet although these girls had married at the same age. In both instances, the girls had to deal with insults hurled at them not only from their husbands but from their mothers-in-law as well. In Violet's case her father-in-law tended to be sympathetic and tried to act as a buffer whilst Lisa's father-in-law was often disengaged and became violent when she attempted to leave their home with her son.

As I analysed my evidence, it became apparent that in cases where the couples are in contact with in-laws who are unsupportive, marriages are less likely to survive. As shown above, four of my participants experienced abuse from their in-laws. What these cases also have in common is that all four girls had entered into the home after being impregnated by boyfriends who were still living at home (aged 20-27). For reasons which were unbeknown to Mirirai and Lisa, these boys' mothers were very unwelcoming towards them. It is only in Sally's case that her mother-in-law made it abundantly clear that she viewed Sally and her child as getting in the way of her (the mother-in-law) enjoying her son's income at a later date, as it had to be shared between her and a newly, and prematurely formed, family. At the point that Sally entered their home, her husband who was 20 at the time had in fact not started working.

5.2.2 Mixed experiences

Eight participants had mixed experiences, as shown in Table 5. In all cases, the marriages started off well and then began disintegrating at a later point. In some cases, there was a distinct point such as a pregnancy after which matters changed but – in other cases – the participants could not identify a distinct point or incident after which things turned bad. Only Itai and Sandra were still married at the time of the interviews and, for these two, the bad experiences can be considered the mid-point of their unions with the positive aspects being before and after the bad experiences had passed.

Table 5: Key Issues Underlying Mixed Experiences of Marriage

| Name and age at marriage | Supportive/loving husband | Provision | Supportive in-laws | Upward mobility | Cheating | Abuse by husband | Abuse by in-laws | Easy transition | Marital status |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------|----------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Tatenda, 15 | | | | | | Emotional, verbal | 1 st wife, verbal | | Separated after 2 years |
| Itai, 15 | | | | | | Physical | | | Married 5 years |
| Matilda, 15 | | | | | | Physical, emotional, verbal | Emotional, verbal | | Separated in under 3 years |
| Martha, 15 | | | | | | | | | Separated twice. 2years, 4 years |
| Tanaka, 16 | | | | | | Physical, verbal | | | Separated after 1 year |
| Sandra, 16 | | | | | | | | | Married 8 years |
| Chipo, 17 | | | | | | Emotional/neglect | Emotional, verbal | | Separated after 1 year |
| Cleo, 17 | | | | | | Physical, verbal | | | Separated after 5 years |

In all instances, the experience of marriage was marked by the presence of a husband who provided for the family and was loving and/or supportive. In some cases, the provision by

husbands even led to the upward social mobility of girls, with these girls being in a better place than before they were married in terms of their economic standing. Husbands who were considered loving were those who outwardly showed their affection, while those who were supportive did not necessarily have an outward show of affection but supported their wives' ideas and passions.

In all cases where the wives had contact with their in-laws, these in-laws were supportive at some point in the marriage; usually only when the relationship between the husband and wife was going well. In instances where abuse was experienced at the hands of in-laws, the perpetrators were mothers-in-law. Where the in-laws were abusive, this seems to have been in response to the way in which their sons treated their wives (except in the case of Chipo where this occurred the other way round). However, not all in-laws responded negatively to changes within their children's marriages. In Tatenda's case, she maintained good relations with her mother-in-law who even tried to keep her marriage together after it started falling apart. For Sandra, her in-laws were both the reason why her three-year separation from her husband occurred and why it ended with the couple back together. Though some of her husband's relatives had persuaded him to abandon her while she was pregnant, it is also one of his relatives who convinced Sandra to forgive him for this and give the marriage another chance.

Looking at the ways in which Sandra, Chipo, Tatenda and Martha got married, we begin to see discrepancies between the conditions leading up to the marriage and the experiences within it. These four girls entered into their marriages based on a prior agreement with their boyfriends. One would then expect that they experienced smoother marriages than the rest but this was not the case.

In the case of Sandra, her marriage was the result of her guardian forcing her to return to the man with whom she had been seen, but he (the boyfriend) had already been trying to convince her to elope. His intentions to marry were made clear by him paying *tsvakirai kuno* just a week after Sandra had officially entered his home such that, when he ran away to South Africa about a year into their marriage when Sandra was pregnant, this came as a surprise to her. For Sandra, it is their three-year separation along with their financial hardships (when they first got married) that form the negative parts of her marriage.

When Chipu first eloped at the behest of her boyfriend, she was welcomed into his home by her in-laws who even seemed to enjoy having her in their home for part of their marriage. The turnaround point was the arrest of her husband, after which she found her mother-in-law turning her back on her. Her mother-in-law's disinterest in (and dislike of) Chipu filtered into her marriage which went downhill with her husband also neglecting her once he was released. From what I gather, an issue around the arrest led to bad blood between Chipu and his family but, unfortunately, this period is not one in which Chipu was willing to go into detail.

Tatenda's elopement was arranged by her husband who confidently told her how he was ready to take her as a wife and he indeed showed his seriousness in the way he treated her. Their marriage only went downhill after Tatenda discovered that he had another wife living with him in the town where he was working. It is the meeting of these two women (who had previously not known about each other) that eventually led to the beginning of Tatenda's abuse by both her husband and his first wife.

Lastly, Martha who was sweet-talked into marriage by her boyfriend initially enjoyed the upward social mobility, freedom and affection which came with her marriage; but she ended up having to end the marriage due to her husband's cheating. In her second marriage, which also occurred before she was 18, Martha was also showered with affection by her husband and even introduced to the man's family, who played a big role in creating a positive marriage experience. This ended because of her husband's drug use and suicide threats, which again was not something she could have foreseen given how happy they were.

For my other participants, Itai and Tanaka, their marriages were the result of a one-sided plan to elope to their boyfriends; while Matilda's boyfriend had initially agreed to take her in when they spoke over the phone but had changed his mind by the time she eloped. In Cleo's case, she was forced to go back to her boyfriend's house after she had spent the night there. For Matilda, her elopement was based on a pregnancy while Itai and Tanaka were escaping from various forms of maltreatment in their homes.

Matilda's determination to start a family with her boyfriend after she fell pregnant saw her family blackmailing his family after he denied knowing her. Eventually, not only did her boyfriend accept responsibility for her pregnancy but his family also agreed to take her in. She

lived in their home happily from the age of 16 to 18, after which she began to face various forms of abuse from her husband and in-laws. Matilda links this abuse after the age of 18 to the fact that she was no longer a minor and could therefore not get her husband arrested for being involved with a minor. From the moment she turned 18, her husband and his family were quick to make it quite clear that they had never wanted her and had only taken her in to avoid legal action from her family. This ill-treatment and blatant disregard for her is what ended the marriage.

With regard to Tanaka, she and her husband initially lived with his parents and she was treated very well as though she was a guest in their house. A few months down the line, her husband began exhibiting jealous and controlling behaviour, accusing her of being unfaithful. His parents responded by first taking his side then eventually distancing themselves when the abuse became physical and a real threat to Tanaka's life. The abuse peaked just after she had given birth to their child and this is when she decided to end the marriage.

For Itai, although she had eloped without previous consent from her boyfriend, there were no warnings that events could go wrong. But, then, her husband began disappearing on her although he treated her well when he was around. These disappearing acts, cheating and the physical abuse after she gave birth were the reasons why she characterised her marriage as a mixed experience as, besides that, everything was well between them. The good times she had had in her marriage undoubtedly played a part in reuniting her with her husband after their separation.

Lastly, looking at the case of Cleo who was also forced back to her boyfriend's house, it is quite amazing to see that their marriage lasted five years. She got along with her in-laws, and her husband actually legitimised the union by starting off the customary marriage procedures. The marriage eventually ended because of his increasing insecurities and controlling behaviour. Without these concerns, their marriage had been very good even though it had been un-planned.

5.2.3 Positive experiences

Eight participants had good experiences of their marriage and only one out of the eight marriages ended with the separation of the couple, with Rufaro's husband fleeing a few months after she had given birth (see Table 6).

Table 6: Key Issues Underlying Positive Experiences of Marriage

| Name & age at marriage | Supportive/loving husband | Provision | Upward mobility | Supportive in-laws | Easy transition | Marital status |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Fadzi, 16 | | | | | | Widowed after 7 years |
| Rudo, 16 | | | | | | Married for 9 years |
| Constance, 16 | | | | | | Married for 7 years |
| Thando, 16 | | | | | | Married for 8 years |
| Rufaro, 17 | | | | | | Separated after a year |
| Mavis, 17 | | | | | | Married for 3 years |
| Amy, 17 | | | | | | Married for 2 years |
| Mercy, 17 | | | | | | Married for 24 years |

All experiences under this category had two issues in common and these are based on how participants described their relationship with their husbands: firstly, husbands were seen in a positive light as being loving or supportive of their wives and, secondly, they were also acknowledged as being providers. In the case of Fadzi, Rudo, Constance and Amy, the level of provision was even such that these girls found themselves living in much better socio-economic situations as compared to their life before marriage. This upward mobility that they were afforded by their marriages also played a role in the positive outlook they have about their marriage experiences. Rudo, Mavis and Rufaro, all of whom had been comfortably placed materially before their marriages, also acknowledged their husband's roles in providing. But, in the cases of Rudo and Rufaro who had actually been employed then stopped working after they were married, there was also the desire to assist in increasing the household income – this was made difficult by the high rate of unemployment and the difficulty in finding jobs after they had given birth.

A third issue that played a positive role in the girls' experiences of marriage was the role played by their in-laws, particularly the mothers-in-law. In cases where the girls spoke of being in contact with their in-laws, they noted that this was a good relationship in which the in-laws were supportive and affectionate. This was true for all girls who regularly interacted with their in-

laws, except for Amy whose mother-in-law and sisters-in-law were unkind and often interfered in her relationship with her husband. The relationships with in-laws are explained in more detail in the Section 5.3.

The eight women presented here had various conditions that led to their marriages, some of which one would expect to lead to negative experiences or mixed ones at the very least; but this is not always the case. Age and the manner in which the women entered into their marriages, whether forced by circumstances such as pregnancy or poverty, or willingly in pursuit of love, had no bearing it seems on what they experienced within the marriage. However, looking at the cases, only Fadzi entered into her marriage without having had any prior conversations about elopement with their boyfriend. But even in this case, the marriage was positive throughout with it ending because of death and not marital problems.

The most surprising case in this category is that of Rufaro, whose husband ran away even though he had actually carried out some of the traditional marriage procedures so that they could live together in a union recognised by her family (seeing as it had started off as a case of co-habitation). Although Rufaro was abandoned by her husband just after she had given birth, she did not find herself bitter because of this and she still classified her marriage as a positive experience given that her husband took good care of her and provided for her up until he fled unexpectedly, bringing their marriage to an end.

Constance, Thando, Rudo, Mavis, Mercy and Amy also had families involved in legitimising their unions even though all except Mercy entered into their marital homes through an elopement marriage of which their boyfriends were at the forefront. For these women, the marriage experiences seem to have turned out better than they did for Rufaro, as all these women were still happily married at the time of their interviews.

For Rudo, who was sweet-talked into marriage, a significant amount of the bride wealth was paid and – although these payments were not completed – she also eventually had a church wedding to solemnise their union. Rudo spoke highly of the way her husband treats her, particularly the way he sponsors her soccer tournaments and looks after the children. Throughout the interview, she had nothing bad to say about her marriage.

Constance, who entered her marriage without her family's approval, had no regrets as she found love and acceptance in her new home, with her in-laws taking on the role of nurturing and advising her to the extent that she was able to overcome the many challenges she faced when her marriage had just begun. Their support over the years and her husband's maturity, which saw him moving from being irresponsible and unfaithful to being an exemplary husband, along with his legitimisation of their union by paying bride wealth, overshadow the speed bumps they had to cross over. Constance views the initial difficulties as growing pains of marriage and does not give them too much weight when talking to her experiences as a married woman, which is why her perception of her marriage remains in a positive light.

Thando's decision to marry was based on her boyfriend's proposal. Moving from a life of poverty and hardship into the home of her husband who provided for her, supported her in her ventures and also loved her, was a big plus for Thando. Both her family and his supported the union even though no bride wealth was ever paid. This marriage has remained strong and Thando spoke of the heartache she still experiences each time her husband is out of town because of work.

Mavis' union began after her boyfriend arranged to elope when she told him she was pregnant. Her mother consented to the union even before she had eloped, thus involving at least one of the families right from the beginning. Although there has been some cheating in her marriage, Mavis did not give this too much thought and remains happy with her marriage. Marriage procedures were also eventually initiated although still incomplete at the time that I interviewed her.

When Amy eloped, although she did it alone on the day, her boyfriend had been trying to convince her to move in with him. Their union began after she went to visit one day and refused to leave. He was quick to accept her and soon began the marriage procedures. Despite this unconventional beginning and her in-laws' attempt to end her marriage, Amy is still happily married.

Out of all 25 participants, Mercy is the only one who began her marriage through the ideal, *kukumbira* channel. Her bride wealth was paid before she moved to her husband's place and began her life with him. She spoke of her marriage as being one between good friends, which she regards as the key factor that has held them together.

As seen throughout this sub-section, women's classification of their marriages as positive does not necessarily mean these marriages have been perfect and free from challenges. Participants did not dwell on analysing their marriages based on how they came to be in them or the age that they were when they did; rather, they did so basing on how they were treated by their husbands and their in-laws as well. This is what truly determined their perceptions of their marriages. Like other older married couples, they faced challenges that they addressed together and found a way to move on, building stronger and happier marriages. In these cases, any negative experiences they may have had as young wives and mothers are outweighed by the positive.

5.3 Emerging themes from the experiences

The section ties up individual experiences (be they positive, negative or mixed) under broad themes which emerged from the narratives. I look not only at the consequences of child marriage and its overall effect on the lives of my participants, but also at the shared experiences amongst the participants.

5.3.1 Abuse

12 out of 25 of my participants experienced at least one form of abuse during the course of their marriage. Of these 12, six were abused by both their husbands and in-laws, five were abused by their husbands only and only Mirirai was abused by in-laws only. Participants who were abused were amongst those who either categorised their experiences of marriage as negative (six out of nine) or noted that the marriages had been going well before the abuse started (six out of eight).

Seven participants experienced physical abuse at the hands of their husbands. This form of abuse often involved beatings, being shoved aggressively and being deprived of food. Tanaka also experienced marital rape during a period where she was recovering from having given birth vaginally. The rape resulted in some of her stitches being ripped and she had to return to the hospital to receive medical attention.

In five out of eight of the cases where abuse included verbal or emotional abuse, or both, in-laws were also involved in the abuse. While Tatenda and Vimbai were abused by in-laws in the form of a first wife who was verbally abusive and brothers who overworked and deprived Vimbai of food, the abusers in all other cases were mothers-in-law who either made it verbally clear that

they did not accept their daughter-in-law, abused them emotionally or treated them in inhumane ways. What this abuse by family members had in common is that it seems to have emerged in response to how the husbands treated their wives. In two (Sophia and Violet) of the three cases where in-laws were not also abusive, this is because the married couple did not come into contact with the in-laws often and in the remaining case (Tanaka) the family was aware of the abuse and simply distanced themselves.

Sally, Lisa and Matilda were impregnated by boys who lived in homes where the mothers-in-law had made it evident right from the beginning that they were not welcome by resisting their entrance into their home. In Matilda and Lisa's case, the sons themselves had also initially distanced themselves from their children and responsibilities such that, when they had no choice but to take these girls in, the feelings of disregard did not go away but became manifest in abuse not only by the boys themselves but by their mothers as well. In Sally's case, while her boyfriend had quickly claimed responsibility, he became emotionally abusive under his mother's influence as his mother often interfered in their relationship by planting ideas that the child Sally was carrying was not her son's. Her husband therefore did not intervene as Sally was overworked and abused verbally. Along with emotional and verbal abuse, Lisa was deprived of food by her mother-in-law while her husband beat her and also abused her emotionally and verbally. In Chipso and Sally's cases, the in-laws began the abuse first and then the husbands followed suit due to the negative influence. Chipso's abuse by her in-laws, who had been supportive, began after her husband was arrested and, for Sally, it had existed right from the beginning although mildly. In cases where food was withdrawn or limited it was not a matter of not having enough money to buy food, as food was available and the family would buy and eat on their own.

Mirirai, who had a negative experience, was the only participant abused by her mother-in-law only, most likely because – for almost her entire marriage – she and her mother-in-law lived alone at their rural home. While there, she was overworked by her mother-in-law who also complained that she consumed too much food. She also abused her emotionally, but Mirirai managed to find friendship and kindness in others who lived in the community and empathised with her situation, as they could see how badly she was treated. Even though her husband played no part in the abuse, he did not come to her rescue. In this case, not only did the mother engage in abuse, she also actively interfered in the marriage.

While we know that experiences of marriage are unique and full of up and downs, it is important to mention that, in looking at various forms of social media, it seems as though violence against women is on the rise in many forms, even within marriages. In many cases, this is linked to a toxic masculinity where men are quick to use force to show that they are powerful and are the head of the family. This is indeed generally true in African societies but, in pre-colonial times, the behaviour of husbands towards their wives was controlled in various ways therefore limiting negative behaviour towards wives. One such way was through the use of the kinship system as respected members of the family could reprimand an abusive man. Husbands were also generally not expected to treat their wives badly or upset them significantly, as the wives were often in charge of agriculture, ensuring that food came into the household from their farming activities (Bourdillon, 1993). In such a context, an upset wife could impact the entire household's access to food by withdrawing her services in the field. In the modern urban context, women can only withdraw sexual favours, which can easily lead to infidelity. Additionally, in modern times, men in urban areas twist tradition and claim that men should be in control of women (and their income particularly) because this earning capacity is given to them as a right when they pay the bride price – the same way that bride price in the past gave men the right to women's labour in the field (Bourdillon, 1993). Even men who have not paid bride price, but consider themselves married, also hold onto these patriarchal views using the excuse that the man is the household head and is entitled to controlling all household finances.

While women could still create their own wealth in traditional times through selling hand-made products for example, men's authority as stated above in an urban environment completely strips women of the opportunity to create wealth and their entire salary may be taken by the husband. Ultimately, urban male authority “vastly exceeds the traditional authority of men over women”, such that stripping women of their hard-earned money also becomes a type of abuse right alongside the emotional, physical and verbal abuse (Bourdillon, 1993: 31).

5.3.2 Family interference

In the cases of Amy, Sally, Mirirai and Chipi, where the husband's families were the first line of abuse, the mothers-in-law also actively interfered in the women's marriages. Only Amy's marriage survived this interference and she argues that this is because she and her husband lived on their own and did not spend too much time with his family. Indeed, Amy even categorised her

marriage as being a positive experience while Chipo had a mixed experience and Sally and Mirirai's experiences were both negative.

At the time that I interviewed her, Amy was living at her mother-in-law's house with her husband and their child, as her husband had lost his job and could no longer afford to pay rent. At this point Amy was dissatisfied with their living arrangements because of her mother-in-law's treatment, and she had been pushing her husband to make alternative arrangements. The issue that kept her holding on was that, having experienced life living alone with her husband, she knew that when they are at a distance his family's influence is insignificant. As she noted:

“My husband loves and supports me but I don't know what happens when he's around his family. He always ends up listening to the things his mother whispers in his ear and this causes tension between us. I'm currently in a very difficult situation because we are staying in her house with four other relatives” – Amy 22, (16.03.18).

Whilst Amy is lucky enough to have a marriage that is still standing, Sally, Mirirai and Chipo ultimately ended their marriages because of their mothers-in-law. All three had gotten married to their 'high school sweet-hearts' and had not foreseen that their marriages would be disrupted by outside influences. Chipo's marriage broke down after she had had the chance to enjoy certain aspects of her marriage but, for Sally and Mirirai, this did not happen. For both these young women, they had been abused as soon as they entered the home, with Mirirai's mother-in-law forcing Mirirai and her son to live apart. In the case of Sally, she lived with her husband but found that his mother was constantly speaking ill about her to him, especially about the paternity of their child. Looking back at her marriage, Mirirai regards the moments in which she had happiness as very limited, almost non-existent in fact, as the few times her husband visited her at his mother's home they spent mostly arguing. Ultimately the marriage ended not because of her husband's immaturity but because of his mother's interference in their relationship:

“From the experience I matured a lot and I learnt that early marriage is challenging and bound to fail if your partner hasn't established himself, and you have to compete for resources with his family once he starts working. We didn't breakup because we no longer wanted to be together. But his mother kept interfering and wanting us to part, up until the point I realised it was a futile exercise staying in a marriage with a significant person in

his life working against us. Everyone else can see that him and his dad both loved me and wanted the marriage to continue, but I pulled out because I realised it would cause more difficulties in the future.”-Mirirai 18, (16.03.18).

In Sally’s case, her husband realised years later that a good relationship had been poisoned by someone close to him but by then it was too late to save the marriage. In reflecting upon this, Sally highlighted:

“My former husband later wrote a letter requesting for us to go and get our child a birth certificate. When we went, he was again begging for forgiveness, acknowledging that his mother had influenced him and manipulated him into believing her lies. But he had done the math and truly confirmed that the child was his. I was still very angry at the time and even reluctant to allow him to get the birth certificate, but I did it anyway for the sake of my child”- Sally 40, (05.07.18).

5.3.3 Cheating

Nine out of 25 of my participants spoke of cases of cheating within their marriages. Three of these child brides (Kuda, Lisa, Violet) generally had negative experiences of marriage, four (Martha, Itai, Tatenda, Matilda) had mixed experiences of marriage, and two (Mavis, Constance) had positive experiences. What all these participants had in common was their construction of cheating as a painful but ‘normal’ part of marriage which a couple is bound to go through at one point or another. The belief then was that one should patiently sit this through and come out on the other side with a happy home. Sadly, this cheating led to Matilda contracting STIs and Kuda contracting HIV.

5.3.4 Runaway husbands

Sandra, Itai, Rufaro, Sophia, Kuda and Pamela were abandoned by their husbands but Itai and Sandra were eventually reunited. Rufaro said she had a positive experience of marriage, Sandra and Itai had mixed experiences and the rest had negative experiences. In all cases, the disappearances were linked to their first child. Rufaro, Kuda, Pamela and Sandra’s husbands ran away after the girls had given birth, and Itai and Sophia’s husbands ran away during the pregnancy. These disappearances were surprising given the conditions leading to the pregnancies

or births. Rufaro's marriage began after she had already fallen pregnant. In fact, her husband went through with the bride wealth negotiations just to ensure that he was viewed as a legitimate son-in-law. Rufaro had a happy marriage right up until the point her husband disappeared and never came back. She later heard that he had gone to Mozambique where he eventually passed away.

Sophia, Sandra and Itai also had good marriages up until their husbands ran away, which led to a break down in their relationships. Sophia's second husband is the one who abandoned her when she was pregnant, which was after he had introduced her to his family and even paid *tsvakirai kuno* upon hearing of her pregnancy. Sandra's husband, who had been begging her to elope by the time they eventually got married, ended up leaving her during her pregnancy. This happened with no notice at all after he had already paid *tsvakirai kuno*. This incident happened two years into their marriage and they were reunited at his brother's funeral three years later, after one of her husband's aunts intervened and counselled the couple. Itai's husband in fact disappeared a total of three times, the third time being while she was also pregnant. He eventually apologised to Itai and asked for forgiveness after they regained contact when they bumped into each other at a local shopping centre. It took Itai's sister to finally convince her to give her husband a second (literally, fourth) chance. From both Sandra and Itai's cases, it is possible to see how families can play an active role in mending relations where marriages seem even beyond repair.

For Kuda and Pamela on the other hand, the marriages were characterised by cheating in Kuda's case and poverty in Pamela's case. These problems eventually culminated in their husbands' disappearance, which might have been expected given both girls had marriages that were a result of flight from their homes.

5.3.5 Material provisioning

20 participants noted that they were provided for during their marriages, with only Rati, Pamela, Sophia, Sally and Mirirai complaining about the impoverished conditions they lived in. All five of these girls noted their experiences of marriage as negative and all, except Rati, eventually ended these marriages – although the reasons behind the separations were not in fact linked to the issue of poverty. While Sophia and Pamela had grown up in poverty and so were accustomed to financial hardships, Sally and Mirirai (who had grown up in lower-middle class families)

found it particularly difficult to cope with their new impoverished living conditions in rural areas. This is discussed in more detail later with reference to transitions.

Despite poverty not appearing as a key reason for terminating a marriage, a husband's provision seems to contribute towards whether a marriage is viewed as positive or not. This was even more so in the case of five of my participants who found themselves in a better financial standing as compared to before they were married. These husbands were noted as hardworking and determined to create a good life for their families, and it is these men who were also supportive and loving towards their wives, which was a bonus. For the eight participants who had positive experiences of marriage, they felt that their husbands provided and looked after them well, even though some of them had moments of lack due to the loss of jobs or a decreased income (but these moments were not dwelt on). For those who had mixed experiences of marriage, all were well provided for at the times where the husbands and families were loving and supportive; after such periods passed, these women also found themselves going through moments of lack and hardship.

5.3.6 Love, support and a stable family

Just over half of the child brides spoke of their marriages in a way that showed how they had been able to experience love and a stable family even though this was short-lived in some cases. Here the love was not only from husbands but also from their in-laws. Mothers-in-law stepped in to groom the young wives and ensure they knew how to behave as married women, how to look after their husbands and children, and how to run their households. This included being mature enough to carry out chores at the right time and learning how to budget for household items and handle the finances. Narrations of mothers-in-law and their support seemed to stand above all other themes where this was mentioned by participants, and it is undoubtedly the case that the relationship girls established with their mothers-in-law also helped them to experience their transition into marriage and motherhood in a smoother manner compared to those who did not have this support.

Out of all participants, Rudo and Thando in particular spoke of their husbands as supportive. These husbands stood by and encouraged their wives to pursue their passions; for Rudo this is sport and for Thando various professional courses. Rudo's husband not only provides emotional support and encouragement but actually sponsors her to take part in tournaments. In Thando's

case, the support was not of a material kind as her husband had been an emotional pillar for her, holding her together and helping her not only to complete her professional courses but also heal from her experience of rape. Both these young women were still married at the time of the interviews.

5.3.7 Difficulty adjusting to married life

Despite all 25 participants believing that they had been too young when they got married, some found it easier to adjust to their new life than others. Out of all the participants, four (Rati, Pamela, Mirirai and Kuda) out of nine of those who had negative experiences of marriage found it difficult to adjust to their new lives as wives; so did four out of eight (Cleo, Chipo, Matilda, Sandra) who had mixed experiences and three out of eight (Fadzi, Amy, Mercy) who had positive experiences. These difficulties were faced for various reasons including difficulties in carrying out chores, budgeting and behaving appropriately. Having to deal with instances of abuse also made it difficult for some to adjust well to married life.

While these difficulties in adjusting did not have any clear effect on the final status of the marriages, they did in some cases have a significant impact on the girls' quality of life while in the marriage. Given that young Shona girls are generally expected to carry out household chores as they grow up, the carrying out of chores was not a problem for most of the young wives. However, those who had grown up with limited exposure to chores or specific types of chores found it particularly difficult to carry them out once married. This was particularly true for Sally and Mirirai, who grew up in urban settings and then lived in rural homes once they were married. They faced hard transitions as they found themselves now having to carry out labour-intensive chores to which they were not accustomed. Sally and Mirirai also struggled with adjusting to the type of food that was available to them, as they were living in households with a lower-income level compared to those they had grown up in. Eating wild vegetables and maize almost every day was close to intolerable for them. As Sally put it:

“I struggled a lot to do the work required of me especially because I was pregnant. Despite this, upon arriving at his house, his mother expected me to do everything: fetching water, cooking and cleaning, and taking care of the other young children who lived there who could not bathe themselves. Sometimes my sisters would sneak to the homestead to help me

with chores... After I gave birth, my mother-in-law expected me to always have my child with me instead of asking for help; so everything I did I did with my child on my back, held in place by a baby carrier made by my mother-in-law.” – Sally 40, (05.07.18).

Although Vimbai and Mercy lived in urban settings as married women, they too struggled with chores. Vimbai who was 16 and pregnant was expected to look after a house of four adult men, which included the hand washing of blankets with which she struggled to cope. Mercy, although in a two-person household of just her and her husband, had to learn how to carry out some of the basic tasks like laundry as she had been spoiled growing up in a house with five older brothers.

Even though the rest of the participants had grown up carrying out similar chores as those which they took on after marriage, they spoke of struggling to balance their time and actually having the discipline to carry out chores. Dishes were often left unwashed and houses un-swept as they went out to play. For the lucky ones, their mothers-in-law were present to help with this transition into adulthood as they stepped in to groom these girls, instructing them on how to effectively run a household and look after their families.

Lessons received from these older women also included learning about budgeting and meal planning, which were major stumbling blocks for many of the girls. Even girls who had grown up in households where they had to carry significant responsibilities from a young age, spoke of how budgeting was new to them; as this is a matter which girls did not have to worry about even when taking on adult roles in their childhood homes. This was in all cases because the children’s legal guardians in these situations were responsible for the handling of finances and financial provision, which left only the physical tasks (such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of siblings) to be undertaken by the girls. The lack of financial training, in combination with limited household income at times, made it even more difficult for young wives to effectively run their households as they had to work with small budgets.

A final challenge mentioned by some participants was that of ‘acting’ like a wife. This included respecting one’s husband and submitting to him, knowing how to interact with in-laws, and behaving and dressing in a dignified manner. Most participants who complained about a lack of freedom, and of having to adjust their behaviour, lived with in-laws which placed a greater burden on them insofar as being seen to behave as a well-groomed daughter-in-law is concerned.

This was especially true for participants who had an active social life before they were married. One of the participants, Martha, was actually glad that she managed to bypass this issue as her husband was always at work, therefore allowing her to continue with her usual life with actually more freedom than when she lived with her mother. Mavis on the other hand said she had already started modifying her behaviour when she was still dating her husband, as he had made it clear he did not approve of all her partying.

In concluding this section, the different levels of ease with which the child bride handled the transition to marriage begs the question about what makes it simpler for some to make the transition. From my perspective, this comes down not only to the level of support provided by the in-laws but also previous experience carrying out chores and holding responsibilities. The girls who spoke of their chores as being easy were those who had previous experience working as domestic workers or those who had grown up in homes where they shouldered most of the responsibility, including caring for younger siblings. In this context, the issue of childhood and the social construction of childhood come to the forefront as issues which should form part of the analysis of child marriage and the experiences of child brides. It is for this reason that, in Section 5.5, I explore the meaning of childhood and the ways it plays itself out in the lives of those who are at risk of child marriage.

5.4 Life after marriage

Experiences of life after marriage differed from participant to participant with some experiencing life after marriage as a relief while others were left with children to care for and no support structures to help them deal with this responsibility. Looking at the lives of some of the participants who have been separated from their husbands and began to navigate the waters of singlehood once again, it is clear that in a number of cases where a child marriage ends (like any other marriage), there are bound to be difficulties faced in readjusting. In this section, I consider some of the extended consequences of child marriage by focusing on the post-marriage condition of selected child brides.

5.4.1 Case 2: Pamela, 25

For Pamela, whose husband ran away just after she had given birth, life after marriage saw her back in her childhood home where poverty was central to her existence. After living unemployed and under the care of her mother for about two years, with the need to provide for her child in mind, she ran away from home and started making a living from prostitution. Sadly, her experiences in this line of work led to the birth of two other children, both from different fathers. In the first instance, she fell pregnant at 21. After the child was born, this man married another woman and started a family with her. He did not abandon Pamela or chase her away, but instead expected to continue a relationship with her. Pamela though was unable to cope with having another woman present and having to share the person with whom she was in a relationship, so she ended the relationship and went back to prostitution. At the time of the interview, this was still her main source of income and she in fact had a six-month-old daughter who was the result of an encounter with a client. All in all, Pamela's life had veered completely off-course as compared to the dreams she had had as a child, and she spoke sadly about being unable to make ends meet to pay rent or send her children to school on her current income.

5.4.2 Case 3: Sophia, 23

Sophia's life after marriage resembled that of her cousin Pamela's. By the time Sophia was 18, she had already been married twice and was back in her childhood home. After living there for a brief period, she too secretly left home to go and start her own household. She turned to prostitution at the local beer halls in an attempt to provide for her child and run her own household.

5.4.3 Case 4: Tatenda, 20

After Tatenda left the polygamous marriage in which she unexpectedly found herself, she was also left with a new-born infant to look after and limited options in terms of the relatives she could turn to for support. Tatenda first sought refuge at a relative's house but soon left with her child due to abuse. She then went to live with her paternal grandmother who also turned out to be abusive. This grandmother had remarried after her grandfather died and was living with her new family, who were unhappy with Tatenda's presence; this affected the way in which she was treated not only by her grandmother but her family too. Her grandmother soon threw her out of

the house, with a baby to take care of and nowhere to go. She met someone who suggested she go to Musasa Project which is where she then stayed for about a month. Hearing of her situation, her father came to collect her so she could live with him in Bindura. While living there, her step-mother treated her badly and also physically abused her child. The step-mother indicated that she did not want the child there and Tatenda should take the child back to her mother-in-law. With Tatenda not wanting to part with her child, given the child's young age and the distance between her new home and her mother-in-law, she ignored her stepmother for some time and stayed on at her father's home. Tatenda ended up leaving after her step-mother had intentionally burnt her son with a piece of firewood while Tatenda was out looking for a job. Since then, Tatenda has been moving around from relative to relative in search of someone who will not only allow her to stay with them but will also treat her and her child well.

5.4.4 Case 6: Matilda, 20

Having ended her marriage on a very bad note with both her husband and her in-laws, Matilda does not keep in touch with them. She lives with her mother and son and makes a living as a domestic worker. Given the continuing hostility between her and her husband's family, there are often problems surrounding her son's custody. While she lives with him in Mabvuku, she complained that her in-laws often came and take her son without her permission and she is not sure how to handle the situation. I referred her to the Musasa Project which gives out free legal advice to young women. Matilda recounted the events as follows:

“There was a day I went outside to get my son to come in for food and I couldn't find him. I looked everywhere for him and was in a panicked state. Towards the end of the day, my former mother-in-law called me and told me that they had taken him to spend some time with them. I never reported them to the police because I was trying to reason with them. At this point I don't know what to do because they still do such things and, when they take him, they don't even look after him well. They don't bath him, they just neglect him and give him one meal per day.” – Matilda 20, (03.04.18).

5.4.5 Case 8: Sally, 40

After Sally separated from her husband in 1993 she remarried in 1996 when she was 18. This time all marriage procedures were followed with her bride wealth being paid to her family.

Regrettably, Sally also faced challenges with her new in-laws as she struggled to fall pregnant, which her husband's family deemed as a great catastrophe. She eventually gave birth to three children with this husband who she still lives with, along with all four of her children. Attempts at shared custody with her ex-husband had failed and negatively affected her son's education. At one point, her son had insisted on going to live with his father and so he was taken in by him and his step-wife. Unfortunately, his father was unable to care for him adequately and he was shipped between his father's rural home and both his parent's households for a number of years, in large part because his father was not willing to give up control of his son (even though he did not contribute towards his upbringing or schooling). This, along with the way in which she was treated when they were still married, are some of the reasons why she continues to harbour significant negative feelings towards her husband and has not forgiven him for how events played out. As much as Sally's marriage today is better in terms of the financial situation, to this day Sally is unhappy with the fact that true love and affection are missing from her husband and her in-laws as well. She is saddened by the fact that she rushed into another relationship in the hopes of having someone to look after her and her son. She was quite emotional as she lamented:

“His family used to complain that he had married a woman who can't give birth but this made no sense given I already had a child at the time. In spite of this, I was constantly criticised and mocked. Even today, although I'm glad I have someone who could look after me and my child, I face challenges with him because he doesn't show any love or affection; all he does is buy essentials in the home and he thinks that's love[tears]. That's one thing that I miss about my first husband, when we were dating we were friends and could laugh together”. – Sally, 40 (05.07.18).

5.4.6 Case 12: Mirirai, 18

Mirirai was in a better position than others as she had a strong family unit with a good income to fall back on. Having ended her marriage and moved away from her abusive mother-in-law, she mentioned that she now looks after the child with the help of her family and does not approach the baby's father for maintenance as he is not yet working. Her former father-in-law does however sometimes send gifts for the child. Mirirai also stated her desire to never go to the court as far as the upkeep of her child is concerned, unless her former husband starts working and blatantly refuses to take responsibility for the child.

5.4.7 Case 18: Rufaro, 20

Soon after Rufaro gave birth, she found herself alone with a baby to take care of. Given that relations between her and her family were still tense, she resorted to moving in with another man who she met three months after giving birth. But this too turned out in an unexpected way, as she recounted:

“We were co-habiting but I was not intimate with him. He soon went and collected his first wife from the rural area and we began to live together. Before this happened, I hadn’t known that he was married. Given I had nowhere to go, I stayed as his second wife. After his wife arrived, I eventually realised that they were both HIV positive as I found a packet of pills when they had gone out. Seeing as he hadn’t disclosed his status, I assumed his plan was to eventually infect me with the virus.” – Rufaro 20, (03.04.18).

After discovering the truth, Rufaro sought advice from Musasa Project as she had previously received counselling from them. They took her into their care for some time during which she was receiving help in getting a birth certificate for herself and for her daughter as well. At the time of the interview, they had had no success in securing the certificates

5.4.8 Case 19: Chipso, 21

Shortly after Chipso was separated from her husband, one of her children fell ill. As a single mother with no relatives to help her, she had to leave her other child in the care of neighbours while she took her son to the town with the nearest hospital. Her son was diagnosed with pneumonia and admitted into hospital. She ended up spending one month in that town, but could not get her other child to join her as she had no personal accommodation there. Neighbours were kind enough to house her child for the month and bring her for visits periodically. They also purchased the medication needed by her son as she could not afford it.

Whilst she was away, her landlord cleared out the room she was renting as she had not been able to make the rent payment. Unfortunately, she was unable to return there to follow up on the situation so, at the time of the interview, she still was uncertain as to where her belongings had

been taken. The good result that came out of the entire situation is that a plan was in progress to get a birth certificate for her and her children, as she noted:

“While I was in hospital, I told my son’s doctor about my situation and he reported it to [the Department of] social welfare. Social welfare referred my case to Musasa Project who is one of their partners and they have been trying to help me get my birth certificate. This will open up more avenues for me, like registering for a course and also putting my children through school”. – Chipu 21, (21.02.18).

5.4.9 Case 23: Violet,56

The end of Violet’s abusive marriage did not mean that life got any better; in fact, she spiralled downwards before gaining control of her life again:

“In the three years after I separated from my husband I began abusing alcohol. I would be at the bar almost every weekend and would only leave at closing time. If I wasn’t in the bar, I would send one of my kids to buy me alcohol and bring it home. It was almost like I was heartbroken but there was also a lot of anger. It was actually through some of my drinking friends that I met my current husband.” – Violet 56, (08.07.18).

At time of the interview, Violet said she was happily married and had a child with her new husband. She speaks proudly of all her children, particularly her sons from the first marriage who are now adults. Because of the way she (their mother) was treated, they vowed never to lay hands on a woman and also to take their time in choosing a spouse and getting married. She spoke of how all three sons who are now in their 30s have finally managed to settle down.

5.4.10 Concluding thoughts on life after marriage

My research, much like research by Stark (2018) carried out amongst girls married before 18 in Tanzania, shows that young women whose marriages end often find themselves alone as single mothers with barely any significant skills or education, and limited options to look after themselves and their children. However, the difference in the case of my study was that— in many cases – the young women were unable to return to their childhood homes unless they agreed to leave their children behind. Of course, this is a difficult call to make and, in all cases, the

mothers refused to part with their children. Though others bounced from home to home, drew upon child protective services or entered into new marriages, it is clear that different coping mechanisms were used to deal with dire situations. However, child brides were ultimately left living sub-standard lives materially, and often in conditions worse than they were in initially, as they now had to also deal with the emotional baggage that comes with a broken marriage or being a single parent or even both.

5.5 Construction of childhood

According to Giaquinta (2016), given that Girls Not Brides spearheads the global fight against child marriage, they are also largely responsible for the way in which childhood and the child marriage discourse is created, utilised and perpetuated. The network also plays a role in “informing the strategy, activities and messaging for all members of the global partnership”, influencing not only how the international community understands childhood and child marriage, but also organising how and why child marriage gets addressed by the development industry (Girls Not Brides 2015: 6). This section provides a discussion on the construction of childhood through a human rights and development framework, placing this side by side with notions of childhood and adulthood that emerged during this study. The purpose of this section is not to judge the practice of child marriage based on moral values or otherwise, or to defend the practice of child marriage, but to bring to light the different experiences, histories and desires held by girls and the way these impact on their experience of childhood and child marriage.

5.5.1 Child marriage and the human rights and development frameworks

The human rights framework considers child marriage as a violation of children’s rights because it is said to strip individuals of their childhood and is also considered a form of forced marriage as all individuals below the age of 18 cannot consent to marriage (Giaquinta, 2016). This framing of human rights violations is based on two premises: firstly, the imagined notion that childhood is a universal category that is experienced in the same way by all children, and, secondly that all children lack the emotional psychological and physical maturity “to consciously and responsibly make these sorts of decisions and give full consent to marriage” (Girls Not Brides, 2014 cited in Giaquinta, 2016: 29; Syrett, 2016; Stark, 2018). In this context, childhood is viewed as a safe, walled space where children have time for learning, having fun and are free

from adult responsibilities and/or experiences (Holt, 2013). This construction of childhood is one that has been critiqued with increasing intensity ever since the beginning of the twentieth century as it is viewed as unrealistic and failing to account for the complexity of age and marriage, and the cultural variations in the construction of childhood (Bunting, 2005; Stark 2018).

The human rights and development approaches to constructing childhood make use of the age 18 to distinguish between childhood and adulthood; however, this is an arbitrary number with western roots and also assumes that transitions to adulthood are linear, once off processes (Syrett, 2016; Holt, 2013). These assumptions are inaccurate as all around the world the transitions to adulthood “happen in a multiplicity of ways that cannot be captured by monolithic representations” (Giaquinta, 2016: 16). As argued by Holt (2013), human life is not divided into separate independent segments, but is actually a curve which ones moves along, with the possibility of some individuals being able to outgrow their helplessness and dependency at a faster rate or much sooner than is expected as far as their biological age is concerned. Children therefore mature at different rates which are influenced by their immediate environment and the circumstances they grow up in (Prout & James, 1990; Bunting, 2005). It is these critiques that led to the new sociology of childhood that has redefined childhood studies across various fields.

5.5.2 Child marriage and the sociology of childhood

Since the early twentieth century, there has been an increase in studies of youth transitions. These studies are an indication of the growing recognition that adulthood does not occur at a singular point (such as at the age of 18) but involves the crossing of various boundaries, which does not necessarily occur in a linear, unidirectional or one-step process (Valentine, 2003; Ansell, 2004; Holt 2013). This realisation has created room for the recognition of the period of ‘youth’ which is often ambiguous, further blurring the line between childhood and adulthood (Valentine, 2003).

For years, sociologists have argued for a move away from the view of childhood as a ‘natural’ universal category to the acknowledgement of childhood as based not only on biological or psychological characteristics but on social characteristics as well (Boyden, 1990; Bunting, 2005). The social construction of childhood not only includes issues around biological age and its relationship to psychological maturity, but also includes the very characteristics of childhood and

issues of children's agency in their own lives. These understandings or ideas of childhood as socially constructed are ones that developed clearly during the course of this study, as findings showed that:

- the experience of childhood for my participants was often not one of being in a safe, happy, protected, walled garden free from adult responsibilities as assumed by traditional western ideals of childhood (Holt, 2013; Kensby, Gwanzura-Ottmuller and Chizororo, 2006);
- children often make use of their agency and rationality to leap from an unwelcoming environment to child marriage which was viewed as a better alternative (Prout & James, 1990; Giaquinta, 2016; Stark, 2018); and
- young women who were psychologically 'older' than their biological age found it easier to cope with the transition to married life (Solberg, 1990).

These three intertwined issues are discussed below.

5.5.2.1 Children as 'rational' social actors navigating through 'childhood'

While children are often seen as passive actors in an adult world, sociological understandings of childhood acknowledge the fact that – in various societies – children hold certain competencies that are often contradictory to certain conceptions of childhood (Boyden, 1990; Taylor, Lauro, Segundo & Greene, 2015). My findings show that children (as active social actors) hold onto a degree of independence and agency and use this to meet their desires, albeit that this agency exists within the boundaries or constraints constructed by adults and various social structures (Prout and James, 1990; Giaquinta, 2016; Stark, 2018). The assumptions about children's mental capacity have been strongly critiqued given that the human rights field has over the past few years called for a participatory approach in which children are involved in decision making around issues that affect them (Waites, 2015). A participatory approach acknowledges that children are capable of being involved in making such decisions; however, this does not seem to extend to decisions around their marital status. Referring to adolescents as having been involved in a child marriage paints, from my perspective, a misleading picture. We truly cannot compare an adolescent's capacity to reason with that of someone who is still to enter their teenage years as biological age does, to a certain extent, influence one's approach to life. This is a point that needs to be engaged with critically, as I believe that the period of adolescence needs to be

delineated and theorised much more clearly according to the international human rights framework.

For at least 12 of my participants, childhood was not a happy time and this led them in various ways to make the crucial decision to enter into marriage. For some, marriage was better than being in an abusive home; others sought to escape from poverty; and others still sought the love and security which they believed was part and parcel of marriage. Although their agency in these cases were limited by the options they faced, it is important to acknowledge the active role they played in ‘rationally’ navigating their way towards what they perceived to be a desired end. Child marriage for these girls was not viewed as a social ill but as a means of escape to a better life (Stark, 2018). This mirrors research carried out in Brazil which showed that indeed girls did consent to unions by making use of their various levels of agency to escape from unfavourable situations such as the control of their sexuality or abuse in their childhood homes (Taylor *et al*, 2015). This constrained agency (and all human agency is constrained) therefore also includes careful negotiation of available options as was the case with some of my participants. The western view of looking at childhood as a safe space which children must be kept in at all costs would therefore not be fitting in this case; and attempts to intervene in children’s lives by placing them back into this box that we label as childhood could in fact prove to be more harmful when compared to letting them make decisions that affect their lives.

5.5.2.2 Psychological and social age and their effect on experiences of child marriage

Various socio-economic conditions such as the labour market, the family and household economic standing influence the way in which people experience their childhoods and ultimately the way in which they mature and face various transitions to adulthood throughout their lives (Valentine, 2003; Bunting, 2005). One’s psychological age includes “skills in memory, learning, intelligence, motivation, emotions” and is made up of behavioural and perceptual components (Hutchinson, 2007: 21). The behaviour component refers to people’s capacity and the skills used to adapt to different environments whilst the perceptual component refers to people’s perceived age. Social age on the other hand refers to “the age-graded roles and behaviors expected by society”- in other words, the behaviours expected of people within a specific age group in a particular society (Hutchinson, 2007).

My findings here complement the research by Solber (1990) on Norwegian children which showed that childhood is constructed in different ways by different families, looking particularly at the way families navigate issues around children's biological ages in relation to conceptions of the children's level of dependence on their parents, i.e. their psychological age. Writing about her research, Solber (1990: 118) put forward that "it is the organisation of daily life, the dividing up of tasks between family members, and the laying down of rules of conduct that implicitly determines what it means to be a child". Bunting (2005) argues along the same lines as she speaks of different constructions of childhood, not only by one's culture but by the socio-economic conditions in one's immediate environment as well, as this also affects perceptions of childhood and expected roles for children.

Amongst young people in Zimbabwe, children often start taking on domestic work from a young age, with some even working for pay outside the home. Some also attend boarding schools where they leave home and live in hostels where they are independent from parents and responsible for duties such as washing their own clothes, shopping, cleaning and sometimes even cooking their own meals where the hostels are self-catering. These various roles, that require a significant amount of autonomy, have a positive role to play in their transition toward adulthood although young people do not necessarily believe they are then full blown adults because they can carry out these activities (Ansell, 2004). These young people therefore simultaneously embody 'child-like' and 'adult-like' attitudes and behaviours to varying degrees. Both Solber (1990) and Bunting's (2005) studies were applicable to my research, as the various ways in which sets of expectations were placed upon children by their families influenced the type of childhood they had and the ways they viewed themselves in terms of their levels of maturity.

Looking at my participants' biological age and their ability to adjust to marriage, it was often the case that participants who had worked as domestic workers or who took on the role of a parental figure in their own households prior to becoming child brides, were socially and sometimes even psychologically 'older' and more likely to handle their transition to marriage in a smooth manner. These 'older' participants were accustomed to holding responsibilities in the absence of parents and guardians, and this led to them 'growing' beyond their actual age. As such, they were able to carry out chores without adult supervision, alongside raising children and relating well with their in-laws. These participants in fact personally stated that their experiences of

childhood had led to them maturing beyond their biological age. This maturity was recognised not only by the participants themselves but, in some instances, by their caregivers (aunts, grandparents, parents) as well, who continued to trust them with holding certain responsibilities and carrying out certain tasks, knowing full well that (despite their biological age) they were highly capable of doing what was required. In these cases, the role of the girl child was developed in relation to the conception of her social and psychological age. Itai put this in the following way:

“I think the transition wasn’t so hard for me because I was actually a bit mature; I was already used to looking after myself and my younger sister. I was technically the head of the household so when I got married I was at an advantage. Doing the chores and keeping the household in order was like my second nature but I honestly did find it strange that I was now someone’s wife”. – Itai 22, (20.05.18).

These points do not imply that children who carry out household chores are automatically considered as ‘older’ by their caregivers. The relationship between work and autonomy often lies in the amount of adult supervision received in carrying out this work. As in Solberg’s study, participants who held a large portion of responsibilities and were often home without adult supervision (such as Itai, Thando and Tatenda) were more likely to be considered not only ‘older’ but more capable as compared to those who had a significant responsibilities and often had adult supervision such as Vimbai and Lisa (Solberg, 1990). The concept of social age and psychological maturity was also visible amongst the participants themselves, with those who had less supervision such as Mavis and Sally proving to be more independent and existing as independent collaborators of guardians in terms of the duties and responsibilities the girls took on that helped their guardians keep the home and family running smoothly (and, as such, coming across as adult-like).

Growing up in an African home, children are generally given chores to complete in the household, so the child brides were accustomed to such an arrangement. However, some were strictly supervised in carrying out these chores and this affected their ability to undertake chores without adult supervision once they got married. So while they may have known how to carry out the chores, actually getting them done was a different story:

“I was so immature when I got married, and I still had that schoolgirl mentality. You don’t even think of washing your husband’s clothes; the house will be un-swept but you’ll be outside playing in the street with your age-mates. As a child, you are told to do your chores but in your own home you can keep postponing” -Fadzi 40, (17.08.18).

However, there were three cases where the participants (Sally, Mirirai and Vimbai) struggled to transition into marriage, not because they had not done any chores at all as children but because the weight of the tasks had increased once they got married. In the case of these child brides, their failure to carry out these tasks called attention to their biological age. To their in-laws, who ordered these tasks, their failure further strengthened the idea of how ‘young’ these girls were. However, I would suggest that the difficulty may not necessarily be linked to age, as a grown woman may also struggle if she has to start carrying out labour intensive chores in a rural household after having grown up in an urban setting (in which there were not only less chores but various appliances and utilities that assisted in decreasing the burden such as dishwashers, running water, electric stoves and vacuum cleaners).

In considering age and maturity, some of the community workers who took part in the focus group discussions blamed child marriage on girls feeling that they are older than they actually are. It was agreed by the community workers that physical appearance is not an indicator of readiness to get married, but that certain characteristics that often come with age were appropriate markers. The link between biological age, social and psychological maturity was, however, presented in a contradictory manner as some community workers equated one’s biological age with being mature enough to think along certain lines when left alone, while others suggested a girl can be socially and psychologically mature and yet her biological age is low. This links to a previous point I made, namely, that families play a key role alongside their children in constructing the roles of children based on the allocated housework and the amount of supervision they receive (or are thought to need to successfully carry out these roles).

We could possibly extend this to suggest that the likelihood of succeeding in marriage as a girl is also linked to the way in which the role of wife is constructed by those around her, i.e. her husband and her in-laws. As one community worker argued:

“Some children [child brides] end up coming home themselves because they realise they cannot handle the responsibilities that come with marriage. Ofcourse, if you can’t even do some of these duties such as cleaning the house or washing dishes without me asking as your mother, of which when I do[ask you to carry out household chores] you call me a nag then you are certainly not ready for marriage. What tells you that someone is ready [for marriage] is how they handle themselves and relationships with those older than them – like are they respectful and also are they able to independently carry out tasks around the home. If I can spend an entire day away from home and come back to find the house had been cleaned and dinner ready, instead of finding her outside playing and the house upside down then, I know my child is mature”. – Group 2, Female Community Worker (06.11.17).

Another community worker added:

“You see some of our children have big bodies and actually look older than they really are. Because of this, and the way they view themselves, and how young men also look at them, they begin to think they are old enough to found a household and this makes them easy to fool. In such as case, it’s difficult to then separate the pair.” – Group 2, Male Community Worker, (06.11.17).

According to these workers, it is such situations (like the one mentioned directly above) that sometimes make enacting the law around child marriage difficult. This is because, even where parents report the young man or his family to the police for allowing their daughter to start a family with him, the case usually does not go very far as the girl gets in the way of legal action if she is not ready to return home. Child marriage reporting across the legal systems works in such a way that it is addressed as a sexual relationship with a female minor, given that it is more likely for this to be proven through the medical examination of a compliant girl compared to trying to prove the presence of a union where all involved parties are tight-lipped around the marriage or living situation:

“It’s a problem with these girls because even you as a parent can’t win if you try and report the case. Firstly, your daughter could tell you that she loves the guy and will threaten to kill herself if you try and get in the way; and, secondly, even if you manage to report the case, the girl fails to cooperate with the police and admit to being sexually

involved with the guy. Then there's nothing they can do except maybe just giving the guy community service and before long they are back together." – Group 2, Female Community Worker (06.11.17).

This approach to following up on reported cases of child marriage works on the assumption that it is always the girls who are coerced into marriage and not the boys, yet as evidenced in an earlier section my research showed otherwise.

5.5.2.3 A reflection on the construction of childhood and child marriage

As shown above, the social construction of childhood is an important issue when looking at the experience of child marriage. Childhood and child marriage are often constructed according to western benchmarks which hold out a universal view of childhood. While 18 is the cut-off age for determining who is a child and who is not, I argue that this age is arbitrary and wrongfully marks adulthood as achieved through a once-off process of barrier crossing where one can essentially wake up more mature simply because s/he has turned 18. Based on my findings, I put forward that the daily experiences that individuals face often play a significant role in determining their level of maturity. Emotional and mental maturity or growth, then, are not distinct features associated with age but occur across a curve, with others being more mature than their age-mates. While this growth undoubtedly occurs within the bounds of one's biological age, it is wrong for us to assume that every child who married before her 18th birthday had their childhood 'stolen' and is or was in need of 'saving'. Some are simply making use of their agency in the pursuit of desired outcomes just as 'adults' would, and for some this worked out better than many marriages we see amongst 'adults' today. The maturity of girls beyond their ages sometimes, however, does not protect them from the negative consequences of child marriage which (in the case of my participants) were more about societal and familial power dynamics and unwilling or ill prepared grooms than the supposed inherent consequences of child marriage. Human rights approaches need to become more contextualised by moving towards being more holistic and by considering various dimensions of childhood and child marriage such as the economic, social and cultural dimensions. This will help to understand how perceptions of age and maturity by girls and their families can contribute to their decisions on entering into marriages.

5.6 Conclusion

Experiences of child marriage are often complex and diverse, influenced not only by the events surrounding the marriage but also by the girls' childhood experiences, the expectations held by child brides, and the roles and obligations transferred from child brides onto their husbands and from their in-laws and husbands onto them. The ability and willingness of both parties to live up to the expected behaviour goes a long way in determining the success of the marriage. As such, positive experiences of child marriage for example are often viewed as positive because of the sense of love and belonging associated with the marriage, starting a new family and the assistance one has (from in-laws) in transitioning into this new stage of their lives. Although indeed child marriage can sometimes lead to a better life for girls, the purpose of the preceding section was not to argue against the existence of childhood or for the practice of child marriage. Rather, it was to encourage a different type of thinking around how we perceive child marriage and the image we have of the children who enter into these unions. Stakeholders must not be so quick to offer girls solutions to stay in their childhood homes, or to leave their marriages, or to roll out interventions keeping girls away from marriage without taking the time to study the social context. This engagement needs to include engaging with young girls and hearing from them how they came to be married and the kind of interventions that would have actually been beneficial. Children are capable of also speaking up about the issues that affect them and their voices must not be ignored. With this in mind, I build on the discussion surrounding drivers of child marriage in Chapter 7, exploring how some child brides responded to family tensions by entering into marriages, which as it turned out resulted in them being better off than in their conventional families.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF DRIVERS OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND TYPES OF UNIONS ENTERED INTO BY CHILD BRIDES

6.1 Introduction

As shown in the previous empirical chapters, the collected evidence uncovered various complexities that not only underlie the experience of child marriage but also have a significant impact on any attempts to explore the experience in a holistic manner. This chapter further explores the complexities faced in studying child marriage, in this case zoning in on the different explanations behind child marriage, the perceptions of marriage and the types of marriage into which child brides enter. Given that the child bride participants tended not to speak of formal, legal or customary markers that distinguished the beginning of their marriage from the point which they actually referred to themselves as having “entered the home”⁶, the final section then delves into the perceptions of what constitutes marriage.

6.2 Drivers of child marriage

Past research has shown that many understandings about child marriage exist with regard to the drivers of this kind of marriage, and that the drivers are often inextricably linked. This is a matter which my own my research findings further verify.

Dominant understandings of childhood and child marriage affect the ways in which child marriage is studied, as explorations are often coloured by the ways we have been taught to conceive both childhood and child marriage (Lewis, 2011 cited in Giaquinta, 2016: 13). Understandings of child marriage in a context where children are said to be unable to consent because of their age are presented as dreadful inter-generational experiences which are the result of coercion. Such assumptions leave no room for the analysis of child marriage experiences where lovers decide to marry for example. Contrary to human rights approaches that present the

⁶ Loosely translated from the phrase “*kupinda mumba*”. *Kupinda mumba*/entering the home is synonymous with the word “marriage”/“married” and refers to the exact moment a woman enters a man’s home as his wife and begins to live with him. All the participants linked the beginning of cohabitation with the beginning of their marriage, even without any customary procedures having been carried out.

marriage of girls below the age of 18 as only resulting from direct or indirect coercion from parents or potential spouses (because children cannot consent to marriage), my research shows that girls can also make use of the limited agency they have to pick out a preferred option from the ones they perceive as available. More specifically, people make decisions leading to child marriage in order to satisfy self-regarding or other-regarding preferences; further, the expectations or perceived expectations of others can play a crucial role in the matter as well.

Amongst my participants, the reasons behind their marriages included being sweet-talked by their boyfriends, poverty and the limited access to education, family honour, moral beliefs and child maltreatment/abuse. All except the first reason stated are linked to some of the drivers of child marriage that have already been identified in the Zimbabwean literature, notably poverty, limited access to education, family honour, religious beliefs and orphan-hood (PSAf, 2015; ZIMSTAT, 2015). The drivers of child marriage highlighted by my participants and which appear in the literature were also pinpointed by the community workers I spoke to in group discussions.

While these categories might appear as distinct and separate, this is hardly ever the case when it comes to child marriage and my research findings are no exception to this. The connected and multi-layered character of the drivers I identified made it difficult to categorise individual experiences in terms of one driver only, as more than one explanation usually existed. The weight of any particular driver tended to vary across cases, as did the ways in which the drivers combined in giving a holistic explanation as to why a specific child bride entered into marriage. For example, in some cases where pregnancy was mentioned, participants also spoke about their limited access to education, poverty and abuse by relatives. Such cases are ordinarily quite difficult to categorise accurately alongside the experiences of others but, for my purposes, this challenge was significantly overcome by the use of the analytical framework on child marriage put forward by Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindemans (2014) as the framework facilitates an awareness of the ways in which various determinants of child marriage fit together under different broad categories.

While the words ‘causes’ and ‘drivers’ are used interchangeably in the child marriage literature, I have intentionally selected the word ‘drivers’ for the purposes of this analysis because of my understanding of the latter as referring to factors that drive the practice, while the former seems

to refer to factors as the source of child marriage. As I reviewed my interviews, and keeping in mind the social norms perspective which is rooted in individual decision making processes, it became apparent to me that the ways in which participants themselves spoke of how they ended up in marriages referred primarily to states of being or factors that act as a pushing force which ‘drives’ them towards the ‘option’ of child marriage. On the contrary, the term ‘cause’ implies clear-cut reasons for the existence of child marriage. The notion of cause also insinuates a ‘hard’ determination in almost compelling young girls into entering child marriage, whereas ‘drivers’ is more compatible with ‘soft’ determination or the conditions which tend to lead these girls to choose child marriage. In this way, the agency of the girls is recognised in understanding why they decide to become child brides.

Using the general theoretical framework (which was discussed in Chapter 1), I found that the explanations or drivers of child marriage that I came across in the fieldwork could be placed within three of the framework’s five categories, namely:

- rational responses followed in a quest to fulfil one’s interests;
- moral rules based on personal beliefs that the rules should be followed; and
- social norms driven by expectations that others think the rules should be followed.

The possibility of child marriage existing because of (i) descriptive norms driven only by empirical expectations rooted in the beliefs that others follow the same set of rules, or because of (ii) customs driven by practices that have been passed on over time, which form the remaining two categories in the framework, do not appear to be particularly relevant. In what follows, I consider the drivers of child marriage in the light of the events leading up to the marriage, as articulated by the child brides.

6.2.1 Child marriage as a rational response in a quest to fulfil one’s interests

This theme explores child marriage as being the result of individuals weighing up options and making decisions based on the option which they believe will ultimately lead them to a preferred situation or outcome. The individual drivers of child marriage which fall under this particular theme include child maltreatment, poverty and the limited access to education, and being sweet-talked.

6.2.1.1 Child marriage as a result of child maltreatment/abuse

The World Health Organisation defines child maltreatment as “the physical and emotional mistreatment, sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment of children, as well as their commercial or other exploitation” (2006: 7). While some literature regards child marriage as a form of child maltreatment, child maltreatment can also be one of the drivers of child marriage, as children raised in homes where they are abused may turn to marriage as a way out of that situation. My research identified orphans and children from broken homes as being at high risk for child maltreatment and, ultimately, for child marriage as well. These facts were highlighted by community workers and the former child brides themselves.

According to a report published by the Parliament of Zimbabwe in 2016, the Deputy Minister of Women’s Affairs in Zimbabwe, Abigail Damasane, posited that orphaned children are at a higher risk of child marriage because of a number of factors that result in child marriage being viewed as an option for survival. These factors include poverty, the lack of financial independence and limited access to education. Although my study identified orphans as a high risk group, this was solely because of the negative way they were treated by their caregivers, be they grandparents, step-parents, aunts or uncles. None of the participants mentioned poverty or limited education as being reasons why they opted for marriage when the opportunity presented itself. Sadly, maltreatment of orphans by guardians is not an unusual occurrence, as articles in the local media have previously alluded to an increase in cases of child abuse due to the growing orphan population in the country (*Voice of Africa Zimbabwe*, 2006, November 20). Bourdillon (1993) also suggested that the high levels of abuse are in part facilitated by the lack of social controls in urban living environments. In traditional rural societies, these controls existed in the form of extended family members who were expected to reprimand parents who neglected or abused their children. Nowadays a family can neglect or abuse children and no one is present to step in and reprimand wayward caregivers; in fact, members of the extended family themselves also play a role in partaking in abuse in some cases. While child sexual abuse is what often makes the headlines in the media, my research identified emotional and physical mistreatment along with neglect as being key issues. In this case, I use the term emotional abuse to refer to verbal violence, rejection, isolation and put downs; physical abuse to refer to forced and

degrading labour; and child neglect to refer to any deficit in meeting a child's needs such as the provision of food, supervision, and emotional and educational needs.

In the context of my study, children from homes in which either one or both parents had passed away often found themselves in situations where they were then taken to live with relatives. This practice is not unusual in Zimbabwe as the notion of *hunhu*, which Zimbabweans pride themselves on, emphasises the importance of the community, particularly relatives, in stepping up and becoming primary caregivers when a child is in need (Gomba, 2018). Though the concept of *hunhu* speaks highly of hospitality and extended families caring for orphaned or abandoned children, in reality this has been on the decline. This is because of various factors, such as disintegrating links between extended family members along with the socio-economic difficulties that make it difficult to take on additional family members (Gomba, 2018). These two reasons may in fact be why I found that the orphaned girls that I interviewed told stories of relatives (in the form of aunts and uncles) who showed blatant disregard for them, even going out of their way to make it evident that the girls were not welcome in their homes. The reasons behind this treatment were mostly unknown by my participants, except for one whose paternal aunt's husband (*murume watete*) saw her as a financial burden.

The idea of poverty, or financial troubles, having a negative effect on the treatment of children is one also held by Mabetoa (1994), who posited that – along with creating stressful and devastating family experiences – poverty negatively affects self-esteem and self-worth which sometimes translates into angry and frustrated adults engaging in family violence or mistreatment. Looking specifically at child rearing, Mabetoa (1994: 90) states that “the materially stressful conditions may reduce the amount of affection and warmth parents could afford their children”, which may lead to cases of child abuse or neglect. Given that this occurs in nuclear families, it is not far-fetched to suggest that this could also occur in extended families as well, and perhaps even to a larger extent in the case of children not belonging to the nuclear family. Hence, at times, young girls (including orphaned ones) became burdens.

Although the reasons for the maltreatment of my study's participants were mostly unknown, the result was the same: in such cases, they saw child marriage as a form of escape. While some hoped to simply be in another home where they could avoid the abuse, others were driven more by their desire to experience love and have a family which they can call their own. The quotes

and short participant profiles below summarise the experiences leading up to the “decision” to enter into a marriage.

For 17-year-old Rufaro, life without her parents was particularly difficult because of her belief that parents or parental figures play an important role in helping to ensure that those they raise have fulfilling lives. She viewed family as the cornerstone of an individual’s identity and, when her mother passed away when she was 15, she found herself alone in the world except for her step-father (as she did not know her father at the time). The situation resulted in her deciding to drop out of school and find a job so as to not be a burden to her step-father. When working, she went in search of her paternal family as her mother had left a note directing her to where they might be found. Unfortunately, her father’s family only accepted her for a while and was quick to reject her once she fell pregnant out of wedlock, leaving the man who had gotten her pregnant as the only option to fulfil her *desire* of being part of a family. As she put it:

“For life to go well, it’s the presence of your parents. Once your parents have disowned you, there’s no chance of you feeling free and happy because your life is in the hands of your parents... The idea for me to get married came as a result of the way in which my relatives were treating me. My maternal grandmother, my paternal uncles and my paternal grandfather were all rejecting me.” – Rufaro 20, (03.04.18).

Although Rufaro feels that she was too young when she was married, she also emphasises the fact that, as she had been neglected, she had nowhere else to turn. Life alone seemed bleak in comparison to being married. Rufaro was faced with a situation where she had to live life alone or start her own family, but the other participants with stories falling in this category viewed marriage as a way out of a toxic family situation. What all these stories do have in common is that, like Rufaro, the options were limited and the girl had to choose between marriage and a life of abuse. As it turns out, marriage was the preferred option for them to get the life free from neglect and emotional abuse that they so desired.

Tatenda, Chipu, Itai and Tanaka all had to live with various levels of abuse after the death of a parent (the mothers except in Itai’s case). Chipu’s case may however be the most moving, as her mother passed away at a point where she was too young to even have memories of what life with her mother had been like. She grew up with paternal aunts, living in constant emotional turmoil

as there was no semblance of love in her life. Instead of being taken in with loving kindness, Chipo was isolated and kept on the outskirts of family life, watching her cousins, nieces and nephews attending school and being showered with love. In the meantime, she was playing the role of the domestic worker who would clean up after everyone and cater to their needs, as if their blood did not also run through her veins. In her own words, she said:

“I really wanted to attend school but this never happened. At my aunt’s house the others went to school but she [her aunt] would tell me that I’m the family maid so I’d stay at home and perform the duties expected of the maid. There were lots of us who stayed there but she expected me to do everything, from sweeping the house and the yard, cooking by the fire, gathering firewood, fetching water and warming up water for the others to bath. I ended up realising that she was taking advantage of me because she knew I had no parents so everything she would say you do it...I ended up deciding that it’s better for me to leave.”-
Chipo 21, (21.02.18).

Unlike Chipo, whose aunt abused and took advantage of her, when Tatenda’s mother passed away she was lucky to be taken to her paternal aunt who loved her and treated her as a daughter. Tatenda’s aunt provided for her and enrolled her in school up until grade five, when her uncle began to complain about the money his wife was spending on fees. He subsequently banned her from paying fees and Tatenda from going to school unless they both wanted to find somewhere else to stay. Tatenda’s father was not contributing to his daughter’s general upkeep and this was another bone of contention in the house. The ongoing fights had both Tatenda and her aunt living an unpleasant life. Tatenda, seeing this anguish, decided to leave the home and become married so as to relieve the strain on her aunt’s marriage. The preference here was to see her aunt happy, and removing herself from the equation through marriage was the way in which she fulfilled this desire:

“I just saw that my aunt was now in pain and anguish and it was around this time that I started dating my boyfriend; then I ended up getting married to him. To be honest, when I got married, I didn’t see myself as an adult but everything I did, like having this child, I did because life had pushed me into the situation through the way I was living. It’s not that I got married because it was fun and I really wanted a husband; my dream was to finish

school but the situation [with my aunt and uncle] drove me to all this” – Tatenda 20, (06.11.17).

While it is sometimes no surprise that extended family members treat children like this, in the African culture it is quite unheard of for grandparents to treat their grandchildren poorly. But the next two participants (under this sub-theme) faced abuse at the hands of their grandparents. Itai, who does not know her mother, had to deal with the death of her father when she was in grade six. She began living with her paternal grandparents and managed to continue to grade seven using money that her father had left behind. However, she lost access to this, most probably due to the conversion of the Zimbabwean currency. Unfortunately, her paternal grandfather who doted on her was unable to fund her schooling as he had reached retirement age. After a few years she ended up moving to Harare in search of her biological mother and this is when she began living with her maternal grandparents. Sadly, her grandfather was abusive because he considered her and the other grandchildren living with them as *vana vemukwasha* (the son-in-law’s children) and ultimately not his problem – they belonged to the sons-in-law’s families and were their responsibility. The abuse soon led her to working as she was not getting any food; and neither was the half-sister she met there. As she recounted:

“My grandfather was troublesome. He used to say get away from here, you’re the son-in-law’s responsibility and we don’t even want you here at our home. I just saw that the situation was hectic, we wouldn’t even get food. My younger sister and I, for us to eat I had to make a plan and hustle. If you don’t do that then you’re in trouble. There were lots of us grandchildren there but we all had our own siblings so it was you do your own thing, and we do ours”. – Itai 22, (20.05.18).

It just so happened that while she was working and providing for herself and her half-sister, she met a man and there came a day when he invited her to visit his home. She agreed and when she visited, instead of leaving and returning home, she then stayed and they began co-habiting. They had known each other for about a month when this happened.

Tanaka’s case is not too different as she also hopped on the chance to leave an abusive home after her grandfather had tried to stab her. At the age of 16, she found herself eloping to her boyfriend’s house after spending ten years living with her paternal grandparents after her mother

passed away. What is surprising is that initially her grandfather had been good to her and paid for her school fees as a child; it was her grandmother who had been abusive from the beginning. She highlighted:

“When I lived there my grandmother used to make my life difficult; ... my father would not buy food so sometimes I would go to bed hungry after being told that, if your father hasn’t bought anything, then you will not get anything.”-Tanaka 22, (21.02.18).

As she grew up and developed her own religious beliefs, she found her grandfather joining in on the abuse:

“My grandmother did not approve of people who practice the vapistori religion so I fought with her until my grandfather almost stabbed me with a knife. I had a boyfriend at the time who lived in the area, so I eloped after I saw that the situation was no longer one I could continue living in given that there were no other relatives I could turn to. That’s how I ended up married; I entered a marriage not really by my own free will” - Tanaka 22, (21.02.18).

The orphaned participant, Fadzi, was not abused directly by her grandmother who had taken up the role of her guardian after both of her parents had passed away. But she was threatened by the impending future of being married off (as a child-pledge) to a man her grandmother knew. She was so determined to create her own path that she ran away (a second time) after her grandmother had collected her when she (the grandmother) found out about the elopement. Given that child-pledging is not only illegal but can be considered abusive, I found it fitting to place this story in this category.

“My grandmother wanted to give me a husband, that’s why I ran away. It was a man who would visit her at home and the way that he was now interacting with me I began seeing that something strange was happening and things are no longer ok. So I found that it was better for me to find my own husband than to be given to a stranger... I met my actual husband at the shops, a month later we agreed for me to elope”. – Fadzi 40, (17.08.18).

Looking at the issue of free will, not all girls who became child brides had the same level of autonomy in entering their marriage, and Fadzi’s claim – which acknowledges the importance of

outside forces on autonomy and choices – clearly shows this. Of course, the notion of absolute free will is problematic but, certainly, different levels and forms of autonomy exist. Limited autonomy is also reflected in the lives of children from broken homes who sometimes find themselves also staying with relatives. The main reason for this is the fact that children are often viewed as belonging to the father and his family. Where a couple has separated and the woman re-marries, it can therefore be difficult to take her children with her into her new marriage; as a result, children are sent to live with relatives. While children may live with their father if he remarries, it is often the case that his new wife is abusive to her step-children. In all my relevant cases, the end result was a breeding ground for abuse, and living in these homes resulted in situations of neglect or abuse. Two of my participants were from broken homes where the parents were no longer together. Their living arrangements ranged from living in the same environment as a step-parent at one point or another, or living with an extended family relative mainly in the form of a grandparent, aunt or uncle.

Kuda suffered neglect at the hands of her step-mother, while Lisa had to deal with being disowned by her father and neglected by her mother. Kuda initially lived with her mother but then moved to live with her father and his new wife, as her mother failed to find a good caregiver to mind Kuda whilst she was at work. It turns out that the situation for Kuda, after moving in with her stepmother, in fact worsened:

“When I was 10, my stepmother used to force me to carry out difficult chores by myself such as carrying heavy bundles of firewood which used to hurt my back... To escape from her treatment, I ended up running away from home in search of a better life, and that is how I ended up married at the age of 16” – Kuda 32, (06.11.17).

In Lisa’s case, her own mother is the one who treated her unkindly as she was married and had started another family. She neglected Lisa, who she sent to live with her grandparents. She was later taken to live with her father and his new wife, but this arrangement only lasted for a month due to abuse within the home; so, she soon found herself back at her grandparents’ house. While her step-mother was strict, her father also made it clear that he was not interested in raising Lisa; in fact, he had only met her for the first time when she was in grade seven. It was after Lisa returned to her grandmother’s house (where she completed her ‘O’ levels) that she met a 27-year-old boy who she started dating up until the point she fell pregnant. As he initially denied the

pregnancy, she stayed on at her grandmother's house and got a job so that she could start saving up and prepare to take care of her child. Unfortunately, one of her maternal uncles showed up and informed her that she could no longer live there and, if she did not want to go and live with her husband, she would have to find somewhere else to go and stay. As she was preparing to move to the rural area (which was her only option at the time), her boyfriend finally accepted responsibility for the pregnancy and agreed that she could move in with him as he wanted to have his child raised in an urban setting. She took up his offer and it is in this way that she became his wife. Though many may not call this a marriage and it indeed does not look or sound like a marriage, or how a marriage is formed, there are many forms of marriage in the Shona society and these have been explored in a previous chapter. Later, this discussion will be extended by exploring what young people are taught about marriage in modern times and the perceptions and knowledge they have of the 'traditional' ways in which one could enter a marriage.

6.2.1.2 Child marriage as a result of poverty and the limited access to education

Research often pairs poverty with the opportunity for parents to receive *roora* for their female children, to cut down on mouths to feed or even just to have their daughter in a situation where she can be better looked after. In the case of my research, poverty was a driver of child marriage because the girls themselves believed that they could use marriage as a vehicle with which to escape from poverty.

Poverty was not a common driver of marriage in my sample, as only two of my participants fit into this category. In the first case, 24-year-old Thando was married at the age of 16 to a 25-year-old man. She married not only because she was living a tough life at home as food and money were very scarce, but she also cared about her boyfriend and had been dating him for a number of years at that point. She claimed as follows:

"I saw that the situation that I was living in was very bad. There was no food at home and I realised if I stayed there I may end up considering turning to prostitution so I can survive; so it was a much better option for me to agree to the proposal. He's actually the one who brought it up because he is an orphan and has no family, and he thought it was a

good idea for us to get married and start our own family seeing as my mother also passed away.” - Thando 24, (06.11.17).

Thando grew up living in Mabvuku with both parents. Her mother, who was a farmer, passed away leaving her father as the sole provider for a family of seven children, with Thando being the last born. When Thando dropped out of school due to financial constraints, she started working as a domestic worker but eventually stopped after she was raped while on the job. The incident left her scarred and physically unable to continue holding a job so she remained unemployed, living in poverty at her father’s house until her boyfriend proposed.

Unlike Thando, Pamela approached her situation in a more direct manner as she ran away from home at the age of 14 due to the financial hardships at home and the promise of married life being an escape from this. Having grown up with both parents until her father passed away when she was in grade seven, Pamela’s family found themselves in a worse state of poverty after they were forcefully relocated due to a natural disaster. She reflected on the challenges arising from this:

“We started off living outside then we moved into tents. We could no longer even go to school as it was expensive; even finding something to eat was difficult and when we did it was very small portions. To top it off, we could no longer make much from the firewood we used to earn a living from as people were getting arrested for gathering firewood. Even when we did manage to get some, we could sit by the road for weeks waiting for customers... All sorts of things used to happen when we went to fetch firewood, as this is where girls would be approached by boys. Then when you see your friends receiving money and chips and refusing to share all these nice things with you, you also start to long for them. My friend said to me, ‘my boyfriend has a friend and if you agree to date him you will get nice things’, so this is how I fell into the trap. I ended up eloping at the age of 14.” - Pamela 25, (05.07.18).

Pamela, like many of the other participants I interviewed, ended her explanation by ultimately linking her lack of education to her early marriage, saying *“If I had gotten the chance to continue with my schooling I would not have ended up with the life I have now.”* (05.07.18)

Although most participants had reached various educational levels, with some going all the way up to Form Four, they all believed that if they had a chance to further their education, they would not have ended up as child brides. This is because they would not only have been occupied in some activity but also would have gained skills that would have allowed them to search for meaningful employment or start small businesses (using vocational skills gained after completing Form Four). While it is true that limited access to education (often due to poverty) results in limited options to make an income or to be formally employed, with today's economy in Zimbabwe being educated does not necessarily make life any easier. This was evidenced by Thando who had been fortunate enough to be trained in various skills but was still unemployed at the time of the interview, unable to use any of her skills because of the lack of start-up capital. Additionally, she mentioned (as did others) that jobs were very difficult to find given the state of the economy. So though my participants believed education would have solved a significant part of their problems, the only matter we can truly be certain of is that going to school would have kept them occupied. As it is, the sad fact is that, because of the limited opportunities, the cycle of poverty is perpetuated with their children being at risk of the same fate. For those like Thando who managed to receive training, the lack of start-up capital keeps them in the very same position as the others.

6.2.1.3 Child marriage as a result of being sweet-talked

Four of my participants attributed their early marriage to having been sweet-talked into it by their boyfriends. The participants used the terms *kunyengererwa* and *kunyengedzwa* interchangeably during the interviews, but the two are not necessarily the same. *Kunyengererwa* often refers to being sweet-talked while *kunyengedzwa* can include some form of trickery or deception into believing things will work out. Looking at the different ways in which their stories unfolded in the interviews, it seems that the situations that led up to their marriages included a combination of both. This is particularly true for 16-year-old Rudo, who was actually employed and making a good living at the time that she left her job:

“One of my male friends who I had known for a while talked me into getting some time off to visit him. I eventually did that and, while I was visiting, he then kept telling me he was interested in me and ended up convincing me to stay with him instead of going back to the job I had left”. – Rudo 25, (13.06.18).

Rudo was amused as she spoke of her own naivety at leaving a job for a man because he made marriage seem like such a grand idea. Rudo had grown up living with her grandmother as she had volunteered to take her in after both her parents had remarried. She dropped out of school at grade seven as her grandmother had many grandchildren to care for and only made money from gardening (so sacrifices had to be made as far as schooling was concerned). Rudo eventually started working so she could help her grandmother support the others. She had been on the job for three years before unexpectedly entering into a marriage.

In the case of 22-year-old Martha, she had eloped when she was 16 due to her childish games and her 25-year-old boyfriend's sweet-talking. As she put it:

“As children we are very naughty and you can meet a man in the street and he reels you in with money. You will be so hungry; then you see he wants to give you a dollar or allows you to travel for free so you are deceived by this. Such things are exciting because you have nothing else to do and nothing to keep you busy; if you did then you wouldn't be so quick to latch onto a man, as you are free to turn down advances”. - Martha 22, (05.07.18).

What is interesting about Martha's case is that, although she grew up living in poverty with her cousins, one of whom is 25-year-old Pamela who got married to escape poverty, Martha did not speak about the experience of child marriage as being rooted in issues of poverty. Rather, she highlighted her own naughtiness and naivety. Constance was drawn in by her boyfriend who did not want them to be separated by her mother, who tried to prevent them from being together. She explained her experience as follows:

“I went to visit him and he kept me late with the help of his friend until well after a reasonable hour for me to get home. From the room he and his friend were holding me in, I could actually see my mother running around looking for me at one point. In the early hours of the morning, they finally decided to give me the option to leave but he convinced me to stay saying I'd regret going home because of my mother's likely response to me (having spent so much time at his house). Given that I had already been beaten many times for even speaking to him or being seen in broad daylight with him, he had made a valid point and so I eloped. This is how our marriage began.” – Constance 22, (10.03.18).

The last participant, Mercy, was married just after completing her ‘O’ Levels. She also saw her marriage as an impulsive move driven by young love and immaturity:

“Sometimes I actually sit and laugh with my husband about how we got married. Like what type of foolishness would lead a child who has just finished Form Four to marry a student teacher who is still also trying to get his life sorted out? He kind of tricked me into not going further with my education by becoming a wife instead... We were in love, I fell for it and here we are [laughs]” – Mercy 42, (10.07.18).

Thus, for these child brides, sweet-talking tinged with trickery in certain cases was foremost in their minds when reflecting upon their entry into the realm of child marriage.

6.2.2 Child marriage as a result of moral rules based on personal beliefs that the rules should be followed

As stated by Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindeman (2014), child marriage can sometimes arise and be sustained by moral rules, that is, moral preferences which are based on personal normative beliefs. Out of all my respondents, Amy was the only respondent who entered into marriage due to her own moral beliefs and preferences surrounding premarital sex. As she expressed it:

“I don’t know whether others nowadays place value on virginity but I do. It’s something precious and it has always been that way for me; they even speak about it at church. It’s always been a natural thing that one gets married a virgin. Even at home my mother and grandmother taught me that the man who beaks your virginity is your husband. I hadn’t planned to get married at the time and didn’t even have the desire for it, but I realised that he wanted to use me so I decided to go ahead with it... I just went to visit him one day then I refused to leave, and that is how we started living together. This was about five months after we started dating.” – Amy19, (16.03.18).

Not only did Amy hold this norm but she also held the belief that girls who have lost their virginity also lose the possibility of one day being married:

“If I had kept entertaining him and tolerating his games I wouldn’t have a husband right now after being used. I’d be unable to find someone who wants me.” – Amy 19, (16.03.18).

Research I carried out in 2014 indicated perspectives contrary to Amy's beliefs, as participants suggested that – in some instances – the urban youth in modern-day Zimbabwe are no longer as concerned about women's virginity as in the past, and they acknowledge that virginity is not an indication of their capabilities as a wife or of their moral standing (Madzivire, 2015).

According to Amy, the way she was raised played a role in shaping her personal beliefs around this matter. While she claimed that her preferences were not conditional on societal expectations in general, there are of course significant sociological insights which show how powerful expectations can be in influencing people's behaviour. This is explored in the following section.

6.2.3 Child marriage as a result of expectations that others follow certain rules and also think the rules should be followed

In this category lie the drivers of marriage that fall under the explanation of child marriage as a social norm. As discussed in Chapter 1, this entails empirical expectations involving a rule of behaviour to which people conform because they believe that “most people in their relevant network conform to it”; and it also involves normative expectations such that “most people in their relevant network believe they ought to conform to it” (Bicchieri 2012, cited in Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindemans, 2014: 15). In other words, social norms involve self-fulfilling expectations which can only exist where the relevant population shows a conditional preference for conformity based on the belief that others hold similar beliefs and will conform to them as well (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2011). This differs from the fourth category mentioned by Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindemans (2014) in that those marriages are based on descriptive norms driven by empirical expectations only and not by both empirical and normative expectations.

A common norm that is often identified as being behind cases of child marriage is what Bicchieri, Jiang and Lindemans term as the “chastity norm” (2014: 4). This norm exists where “daughters are expected to be chaste and the slightest suggestion of premarital sex can ruin the reputation of both daughter and parents” (2014: 4). My research revealed two of the ways in which the chastity norm can condition entry into child marriage. The first way is by daughters themselves making the decision to enter into marriage to avoid the negative social consequences of premarital pregnancy; and the second involves parents chasing away daughters who have fallen pregnant (or exhibiting the potential to do so through staying out late). In this category, the

decisions to marry off daughters outnumbered the number of girls who made independent decisions to enter into marriage. While it is unclear whether the decisions are made to protect the daughter's image or that of the family, both explanations can be traced back to the concept of *hunhu* and appropriate behavior for unwed youths.

For the purposes of this thesis, the concept of *hunhu* is one I regard as a social norm and not a custom. This is because the following of rules, when operating under *hunhu*, occurs not simply because this is what people are taught over generations (as a custom), but also because people think that others also think the rules should be followed and they thus believe that others would follow the same rule. For this reason, all behaviours exhibited by participants with regards to the chastity norm are better suited to this category.

Looking at Zimbabwe from the outside in, it is easy to see the great value that people place on their cultural heritage as far as being a people with *hunhu*, that is, a people who are “well rounded, respectable and respected”, is concerned (Nziramanga 1999 cited in Sibanda, 2014: 26). The concept of *hunhu* is used to measure a person's personality on a moral basis (in terms of them being good or bad) and it is one of the key societal norms and values passed on from generation to generation (Shoko, 2007). The practice of *hunhu* is interwoven into all areas of life including sexual beliefs and practices around marriage, where its presence is manifested through the emphasis on virginity and personal/individual sexual control by unmarried women. This is linked to what Zimbabweans deem to be respectable “traditional” gender and sex roles which lead to what are considered to be proper and disciplined approaches to sex (Chimuka, 2001; Shoko, 2007). Young women are expected to be immersed in *hunhu*, and are therefore expected to avoid premarital sex and to focus on exercising self-control in both instincts and passions, allowing them to be married off as virgins (Shoko, 2007).

Traditionally, virgins would fetch a higher bride price, with the husband required to pay an additional cow to the wife-to-be's family as a token of appreciation for her being raised as a well behaved and respectable girl. This cow, called *mombe yechimhanda* was forfeited if it turned out the girl was not a virgin. A broken clay pot or a sheet with a hole in the middle would be sent to her family instead, showing that she had been “spoilt” thus bringing shame to the family as it indicated the family's failure in instilling a strong sense of *hunhu* (Epprecht, 2004; Kambarami, 2006; Shoko, 2007). Additionally, the groom's family could also negotiate a lower bride price as

the girl was said to show “a potentially dangerous streak of disrespect for her elders” (Epprecht, 2004). The promise of *mombe yechimhanda* was therefore ideally thought to encourage sexual purity before marriage, as blood stained sheets were used to verify the woman’s virginity after her first sexual encounter with her husband thus allowing the award of the cow and also positively affecting the family’s social status. While many argue that the increase in pre-marital sex and sexually-transmitted infections amongst young people in Zimbabwe implies a loss of *hunhu* and a decline in the honouring of traditional attitudes and norms, my research shows that this is in fact not the entire truth. In a sense, many young people in Zimbabwe have simply created a middle ground on which they seem to embrace both the concept of *hunhu* and the idea of individual freedom as far as their sexuality is concerned. This middle ground is where they take on what I will refer to as “damage control” or “corrective” measures.

6.2.3.1 Girls’ use of child marriage as a form of damage control

Young people in Zimbabwe find themselves living in a time where they want to brush off the traditional gender and sex roles and the expectations that come with them, therefore giving themselves room to embrace their sexuality. Though both young people and older generations believe that this is in fact happening, young people may have simply migrated towards a hybrid culture which is made up of ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ beliefs and practices (Chikovore, 2007; Madzivire, 2015). This mixing of old and new, involving a reworking of the past in the present, allows young people to experience a degree of sexual freedom without completely disregarding the values that have been passed down to them. Research that I carried out amongst university students in Harare in 2014 suggested that, within this hybrid culture, there is the award of greater sexual freedom for females. This change allows for pre-marital sex and sexual expression without women automatically being labelled negatively; however, this is only the case if done within the confines of monogamous long-term relationships (Madzivire, 2015). Due to these modified restrictions still being placed on females and the expression of their sexuality, they prefer to ensure that their sexual activity remains within their private domain – possibly with only close friends being aware of whether one is sexually active or not (Madzivire, 2015).

In this context, examining child bride marriages entails an exploration of the ways in which young people try to accommodate the ‘old’ and the ‘new’, as it involves showing how girls act in situations where what was once their private sex life begins to enter the public domain – this

occurs the moment they are aware that they are pregnant and will eventually reach a point at which the evidence of their sexual activity is visible to all. As mentioned before, the concept of *hunhu* is traditionally used as an assessment of character and attributes of *hunhu* (such as self-control) are highly valued and are thought to indicate a respectable and smart woman (Shoko, 2007). Admitting openly to the larger community to not only having engaged in pre-marital sex, but also doing so with no protection, automatically puts one in a position contrary to this and also brings shame upon the girl's family. One response in this case then is to try and legitimise the sexual activity before the pregnancy becomes public knowledge, and this can be done by entering into marriage either as soon as the girl realises she is pregnant or just before the pregnancy begins to show. Mirirai and Matilda, who fell pregnant at ages 16 and 15 respectively, openly admitted to having hidden their pregnancies initially. For Mirirai, she hid her pregnancy on two fronts, showing first of all the importance she placed on what her family members would think and how she would be judged by other parents in the community, and secondly, the way in which young people might judge each other as well. Combined, this affects the way in which someone in Mirirai's situation responds and acts:

“I was living with my grandmother at the time and I hid the pregnancy from her. To ensure that she wouldn't notice, I lied to my mom that she [my grandmother] was treating me badly so that I could have an excuse to stay with my mother in South Africa. My boyfriend had agreed with my plan to stay in South Africa until he got a job and was able to take me into his home. Unfortunately, as soon as I arrived in Johannesburg, my mother noticed I was pregnant and I was sent back to Zimbabwe to deal with the situation. I ended going to live with him sooner than planned. I also stopped going to school because I had fallen pregnant and I didn't want my peers to know this, given I was one of the popular girls and shouldn't have been found in such a situation.” – Mirirai 18, (16.03.18).

Matilda's case was similar as she also hid the pregnancy for as long as she could. In her reflections, she thus noted:

“The reason why I eloped was that I was pregnant and it didn't make sense for me to continue living at home. I tried to hide it for a while but it was becoming visible and I realised that I can't keep staying at home and it's better if I go and be with the father of the child. I had already spoken to my sister who also agreed with my sentiments and

encouraged me to elope to his house and she even accompanied me”- Matilda 20, (03.04.18).

Research by the Human Rights Watch (2015, par. 8) showed that “in some cases girls who become pregnant or are sexually active decide to enter a customary marriage because they fear being rejected, beaten, or abused by relatives”. However, the participants in my research seem to have made the decision to marry not only because of this, but also because of the fear of being looked down upon by others who fall into their reference group such as friends and peers. Additionally, some felt a sense of duty to not burden their family with taking care of a child, which traditionally does not “belong” to the wife’s family. In this case, it is therefore the children and not the parents who “go to extremes to retain this honour”, as in some instances it is the pregnant girls who insist on the marriage as a form of “damage control” even where the family opposes it (Human Rights Watch, 2015: par. 8).

This was the case with Matilda, who was concerned that her elopement did not go as planned but she still insisted on following through with it. Matilda’s boyfriend had initially agreed to take her in but, when she arrived at his childhood home where he was still staying with his parents, he claimed that he did not know her. After having spent hours outside their house in the cold, Matilda’s uncle came to convince her to return home but she refused to leave. Her boyfriend’s family eventually agreed to take her in after Matilda’s relatives threatened to get their son arrested for statutory rape. This then was the beginning of her marriage. Rati, much like Matilda, also insisted on entering into a marriage despite her family not supporting this decision:

“When I found out I was pregnant the only logical thing to do was to get married. As soon as I knew about the baby I told my family of my plans. Even though they tried to talk me out of it, it only makes sense that a child should be raised by a married couple, that’s the right way” – Rati 25, (17.08.17).

The girls’ determination to “fix” their wrongs possibly shows a different angle to the child marriage explanation which is rooted in maintaining family honour. Usually this explanation is centred on girls being forced into marriage by their families to avoid the shame the family would face if their daughter was found to be sexually active or pregnant outside the bonds of marriage. In this case, perhaps the girls themselves were not just worried about their own reputation but

also wanted to protect their families. The families though were more concerned with the girls' lives and well-being than with the repercussions of their actions. In a different twist, Vimbai (who fell pregnant at 16) told her paternal aunt about the situation and she was advised to elope to the boy's house, which she agreed to do and did with her aunt's help despite her family being against this. Her parents soon began motions to have her returned to their home. This shows how there can indeed be cases where parents are driven by other-regarding preferences and not self-regarding ones. In this study, I also came across cases where relatives were the driving force behind child marriages as shown below.

6.2.3.2 Family use of child marriage as a form of damage control

When child marriage occurs due to the influence of parents or relatives, this is often because they hold “the normative expectation that others hold that women should be chaste” (Bicchieri, Jiang & Lindemans, 2014: 13). This belief is held alongside the empirical expectation that, should others find out that their daughter has broken this normative expectation, the parents and their daughter will face punishment – maybe in the form of social exclusion or being the targets of malicious gossip. These two together strongly influence behaviour such that, even if there is only the slightest suggestion of pre-marital sexual activity, parents may quickly react by forcing their daughter to get married (Human Rights Watch, 2015). This is what happened to three of my participants, with three others having been sent away for actually being pregnant. Below are the stories of the first three child brides (Cleo, Sandra and Sophia):

“I slept away from home so when I got back home the next day my mother told me to go back to where I was coming from; so I went back and the boy accepted me as he lived alone. My mother had found out that I was at a boy's house because my aunt saw me at my boyfriend's house and told her. When I went there and became his wife I actually wasn't pregnant. I ended up falling pregnant within the marriage. We had been dating for about 8 months and I tried to resist the marriage but my mom insisted so I ended up going through with it.” – Cleo 22, (13.06.18).

“I dropped out of school at grade seven as I had no birth certificate and therefore couldn't write my exams. I then started working as a maid and, when I was 15, there was a point where I took a break from working and went to live with my maternal uncle. I went to visit

this guy who was pursuing me while I was living there and my uncle found out and he then told me 'that's your new home so stay there'. One of his friends had seen me arriving at the guy's house and told him so; when I returned home, my uncle rejected me and sent me away. I went back to the guy's house and he took me in." - Sandra 24, (20.05.18).

"I started being naughty at 13. I was not sleeping at home until at 14 my mom said 'you have spent too much time sleeping away from home, so go back to where you came from'. The boy wasn't straight about not wanting to be married yet at the time, so I went back to his home and took on the role of his wife." - Sophia 23, (05.07.18).

In two of the three cases where the girl was sent away from home because she slept elsewhere or had come home late, the parents then changed their minds and sent for the girl after they had a chance to cool down. The participants however refused to return home, one because of the belief that her failure to commit to the man could lead to her becoming immoral, and the other because she suspected she was pregnant. As Sandra and Sophia said, respectively:

"My uncle later told me to come back home but I refused because I realised that I can't be going in and out of men's houses as this potentially leads to a trend that then results in sleeping around. This is how people end up being labelled as lacking hunhu." - Sandra 24, (20.05.18).

"My mom sent my cousin to come and tell me that I could come back home but I refused. By that time, I suspected I was pregnant and I didn't want to return with the additional financial burden of a baby, so I stayed there." - Sophia 23, (05.07.18).

In the last three cases that fall into this category, families forced the girls into marriage after they had fallen pregnant. Sally for instance had been dating her boyfriend for some time by the time she fell pregnant, but she says that she had only had sexual intercourse with him a few times. She was actually oblivious to the fact that she was pregnant at the time that the pregnancy was confirmed. In the case of Mavis, she fell pregnant at the beginning of her relationship; and, for Violet, her pregnancy was a result of rape but this was not factored into the decision. To quote Sally, Mavis and Violet in turn:

“My father is the one who actually realised I was pregnant, but my stepmother didn’t think it was true. He kept going on about how I didn’t used to eat but had started consuming more and gaining weight. So they ended up locking me in the bedroom and my stepmother examined me and then confirmed that I was indeed pregnant. Even I hadn’t realised I was pregnant; I didn’t know anything about that stuff and had only had sex with my boyfriend three times. My stepmother was very loving and supportive. She wanted me to stay and continue with school but my father insisted I go, even though he was hurt by the events, particularly because I was a very smart kid and was doing well in school”. – Sally 40, (05.07.18).

“We didn’t date for long before getting married. It had been about two months then I eloped and started living with him as I had fallen pregnant. He is the one who first realised that I was pregnant and he told me to elope, but I initially refused as I wasn’t certain that I was pregnant. My mom questioned me and I denied for a while but, when I eventually admitted it, I told her that he knew about the pregnancy and had told me to come to his house. So she got her sister to accompany me there and he happily accepted me”. - Mavis 20, (08.07.18).

“When I fell pregnant, my sister, the one I was staying with, made a unilateral decision for me to be sent to the boy’s house. She took her friends and they escorted me. My parents were only told afterwards that I had been married off. Seeing as I had been living with this sister who was looking after me, other relatives agreed with her mode of action, saying they were not responsible for me but, seeing as she was, she could make the call. To this day I think if my family had not sent me away, I would have had a much better life” – Violet 56, (08.07.18).

The six cases of child marriage in this category of child brides actually went against the perceptions of child marriage held by community workers. Conversations with them generally pointed towards children being ‘naughty’ and going into marriage against their parents’ wishes. According to the workers, following nationwide community awareness campaigns and the 2016 ruling which declared child marriage unconstitutional, the ways in which parents now approach child marriage has changed, with parents now being aware not only of the law but also of the

negative consequences of child marriage. The workers further explained that, in cases where children continue running off to their boyfriends, the boy's family was more likely to let the girl stay if her and her boyfriend were near in age as compared to when the girl was significantly younger. This, the community workers claim, possibly shows the parents' awareness of the laws around involvement with a minor. As one community worker put it:

“Parents now know the rules and don't marry off their children; it's the children who are the problem. Young girls don't listen; they fall pregnant when they are young then you hear that the girl has eloped. It's a problem because you can't be with these kids all the time, and you never know what they are doing.” – Group 2, Female Community Worker 2 (06.11.17).

The community workers also claimed that the proliferation of child marriage in their community before 2016 was linked to material benefits received from marrying off a virgin:

*“Back then, there was a bit of self-centeredness driven by the idea that the person who breaks a girl's virginity is meant to pay for this. Mothers would therefore think of the fact that, if their daughters ended up being married to someone who had not broken their virginity, she would miss out on *mombe yechimhanda* and other tokens of appreciation given to a mother such as *masungiro*. The daughter would therefore be married off to whoever the mother assumes to have had sexual intercourse with her. Girls who had simply slept over at a boy's house were therefore also married off because of this fear.”* – Group 2, Female Community Worker 5 (06.11.17).

6.2.4 Concluding thoughts on the drivers of child marriage

Drivers of child marriage are often complex and interrelated, thus making them difficult to categorise, which is a challenge the social norms perspective seeks to address. While there has been a call for a participatory approach to development issues involving children, children's voices are still often silenced and children are still perceived as being unable to make rational decisions – as they are seen as lacking the moral agency to do so when it comes to issues of marriage and sexual relationships (Waites, 2005; Bhana, 2008). This section has countered these assumptions, showing the ways in which girls are sometimes involved in thought processes where they make rational decisions based on their perceived options, just as adults do.

Furthermore, my research shows that boys can also be coerced into marriage. Whilst children can sometimes be pushed into marriage, they should not be seen as passive victims in all cases of child marriage. If perceived as such, this then makes inaccurate assumptions about their agency and vulnerability, issues which sit at the core of the human rights and development frameworks.

There are many cases, as shown in this section, where young women stated that their marriage was a result of some form of elopement where the girl begins living at the man's house before any formal procedures have occurred. As I will later show, in some cases, the girls continue to consider themselves married even though the customary marriage procedures are actually never carried out. This questions the definitions of marriage that we see under the mainstream ideas of marriage in Zimbabwe, and makes the exploration of traditional marriage practices a crucial part of this research. The next section thus begins an exploration into how exactly child marriage fits in with the institution of marriage in this context, presenting a picture of what exactly it is that constitutes marriage amongst the study population, along with the way in which this fits into broader questions of marriage in Zimbabwe. This discussion can be viewed as a continuation of an understanding of forms of marriage as set out in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

6.3 Exploring child marriage in relation to the institution of marriage

Given the fact that marriage is understood differently across the world, it is important (when carrying out research) to take into consideration the ways in which marriage is constructed within the specific context under investigation. As I interacted with various participants in the form of former child brides, NGO representatives, governmental representatives and community workers, it quickly became apparent that child marriage within my study population fits into the marriage system in Zimbabwe in a rather unique way. Zimbabwe's dual legal system allows for four broad categories of marriage, namely, civil marriage, co-habitation, registered customary marriages and unregistered customary marriages. In some countries, child marriage can be found in all four forms. In these countries, birth and marriage registration procedures are important for the verification of age. In countries where child marriage exists mostly in the form of co-habitation or unregistered customary unions, issues around registration become unimportant. Findings from my study bring to mind the idea that this could possibly be the case in Zimbabwe as, amongst my study population, child marriage presented itself in the form of co-habitation and

unregistered customary unions only. This could possibly be part of the explanation as to why the inadequacy of birth and marriage registration procedures, which was noted as one of the main drivers of child marriage in Africa, did not appear in the Zimbabwean literature – as the issue of birth certificates being used to verify ages, before a couple is brought together in union, becomes irrelevant where the marriages are not registered at all. Additionally, most participants in the study were unaware of the fact that customary unions can in fact be registered so that they can be subsequently legally recognised. For these reasons, this section focuses only on marriage in the form of co-habitation and unregistered customary unions.

Section 6.3.1 involves a discussion of the types of marriages found amongst the child brides. I discuss the difficulties faced in actually categorising these marriages and, in the following section I consider how their perceptions of marriage interconnect with what they learnt about marriage and family in their earlier years. Interwoven within these discussions is the community's construction of marriage and child marriage, based not only on the evidence collected from the former child brides but from community workers as well. The terms 'union' and 'marriage' are used interchangeably in these discussions.

6.3.1 Types of marriages

All cases of child marriage recorded in this research, along with all the cases discussed with community members and other stakeholders, present child marriage as an act that occurs only in the form of co-habitation or unregistered customary marriages. Although there are various types of marriages that are culturally recognised amongst the Shona, these marriages are all centred on the potential son-in-law's family paying bride wealth to the potential bride's family. These payments are not usually linked to a single ceremony or event and can generally be drawn out over many years. This sometimes results in couples being in different stages on the path to forming a customary marriage and yet the couple themselves and their families recognise the marriage even before all the final payments are made (Udry, Dole & Gleiter, 1992). It is therefore possible and common for a union to be recognised as marriage as both an institution and a process even though the marriage has not been formalised and finalised through a legal or religious rite or ritual. In effect, this makes it difficult to identify the exact moment in which the marriage began.

In order to overcome this problem of pinpointing the exact moment when one moves from the state of being single to the state of being married, I use the outline of marriage presented in the World Fertility Survey where the marriage of a woman was explained as “a more or less stable co-habitation with a man whether based on marriage which is sanctified by religion, law or custom or is simply a ‘marriage of convenience’” (cited in Udry, Dole & Gleiter, 1992: 10). Based on this perspective, the date of marriage then refers to the point when the female began living with her husband even if this differs from the date of the “formal marriage” if this exists at all (Bledsoe & Cohen, 1993). This is very useful in the context of Shona marriage, as the Shona speak of *kupinda mumba*, which directly translates to entering the home (as a wife); and this can occur even before negotiations about a possible union begin, depending on the type of marriage procedures followed. This phrase was also used by most of my participants.

As discussed earlier in the thesis, marriages where the bride wealth is paid before the bride and groom live together are most ideal and desirable; however, several alternative marital unions which deviate from this exist. Amongst the Shona, there is the belief that once one has begun living with a man, sexual intercourse is soon to follow. At the same time, a woman is expected to remain a virgin until the point they live with a man. Co-habitation is expected to happen only once one is married as co-habitation is linked to sexual relationships which ideally are only expected to exist between a married couple. Based on these beliefs, Udry, Dole and Gleiter (1992) classified alternative unions in Zimbabwe as follows: semi-traditional unions where bride wealth payments start after the couple has had intercourse (i.e. after co-habitation begins) but before pregnancy; semi-modern unions where payments begin once the woman falls pregnant; and modern unions where a couple lives together with no negotiations or payments having been arranged or made. While some men may have the intention to legitimise their marriages but lack the resources to do so by paying even part of the bride wealth, others prefer to stay clear of customary or civil procedures that officialise unions. As noted by Jeater (1993), sometimes it is even women who desire these *mapoto* unions as they come with various advantages (as discussed in Chapter 3). In these cases, then, the parties (man and woman) involved ensure their case of co-habitation (*mapoto*) remains just that. As stated by a community worker, when commenting on the issue of paying bride wealth:

“Sometimes you are just poor. Love comes first and you are together for a while but can’t afford to marry. This is when you agree with your woman for her to just elope and you start living together. At that time, you would have promised to later pay the bride wealth and for sure you will have the intention. But, when you are now living together, you may get your hands on some money but there are now other priorities that you and your wife want to meet to build your household. So even though you once had the intention and maybe still do, you spend many years co-habiting. Maybe in the end you don’t even pay the bride wealth.” – Group 3, Male Community Worker 3, (06.11.17).

Meekers (1994) distinguished between traditional *roora* marriages where the bride is handed over after the bride wealth negotiations and payments are complete, and ‘ongoing’ unions or unions in progress where the complete bridewealth has not been paid but marriage negotiations have begun and/or *rusambo* (which traditionally transferred sexual rights to the son-in-law) has been paid. Drawing on this distinction, I argue that semi-traditional and semi-modern unions can also be viewed as ‘unions in progress’, with modern unions having the potential to progress to either one of these unions as well. In other words, modern unions (i.e. co-habitation) can progress to a semi-traditional union where negotiations begin before the woman falls pregnant or to a semi-modern union where negotiations begin after the woman has fallen pregnant. If the entire bride wealth is paid at these points, then the union becomes a completed semi-traditional or semi-modern union. But, if the payment of the bride wealth is extended over weeks, months or even years, then the union is considered one that is still in progress up until the point when the complete bride wealth has been paid. The length of time taken to pay the rest of the bride wealth is not necessarily or particularly relevant, and some husbands in fact continue to make payments even after the wife has died. Though some families are happy to agree to the burial based on the husband’s promise to finish paying off the bride wealth, others insist that the outstanding amount be paid before they agree to a burial (Nyathi, 2005).

If semi-traditional and semi-modern unions are considered as unions which have the potential to progress towards more normative forms of marriage should the man decide to start bride wealth payments, then ten out of the 25 cases I recorded sit in a grey area between deviant unions where no payments have been made and normative ones where negotiations have begun (Meekers, 1994). Given that normative Shona marriage arrangements require the eventual payment of the

full bride wealth, some maShona argue that a marriage is not complete until this is done; yet other maShona argue that the bride wealth payment process (as in the past) hardly ever comes to an end, which is expected and accepted. In reality, it is the elders involved in the negotiation process who have a say as to when a couple can begin referring to themselves as married. This differs from family to family, depending on the family members' expectations on the amount of bride wealth they feel is significant enough for them to hand over for their daughter. Some families do indeed ask for the entire bride wealth, but others are happy with a certain proportion having been paid and for the rest to come in a series of instalments. Some community workers argued that it all comes down to parents understanding the meaning of marriage and putting their children's happiness before their own desire for bride wealth. As one community worker argued:

“Marriage is about building relationships between two families and those who truly understand this are the ones who approach the payment of bride wealth differently. Sometimes they make payment plans and sometimes the bride wealth doesn't matter. All that the brides' parents want is someone who can live well with their daughter and give her a happy life. They agree to even just an outfit or a small token. Even without the bride wealth paid, you will find those people have a happy marriage” – Group 3, Female Community Worker, (06.11.17).

In the case where instalments are expected to be paid, the amount of time it takes for this to be done is not particularly relevant and the instalments do not make a person any more married than they were before the instalments began. However, amongst the Shona, the phrase “*haasati apedza kuroora*” is used, which translates to ‘he has not finished marrying’. This then contradicts the bride's family's general acknowledgement of the couple as married. These complexities are what make it difficult to clearly study marriage amongst the Shona. The table below (Table 7) shows the current state of my participants' unions or, in the case where the union has ended, the state it was in just before it ended. The term ‘complete’ indicates participants whose bride wealth was fully paid, whilst ‘ongoing’ indicates that the negotiation process began but not all payments were made.

Table 7: Types of Unions Found Amongst Child Brides

| Traditional | Semi-traditional | Semi-modern | Modern |
|------------------|--|--|---|
| Mercy (complete) | Rudo (ongoing) Tatenda (complete) Amy (complete) Sandra (ongoing) Kuda (ongoing) | Rati (complete) Mavis (ongoing) Constance (complete) Lisa (ongoing) Mirirai (ongoing) Matilda (ongoing) Tanaka (ongoing) Cleo (ongoing) Rufaro (ongoing) | Pamela Martha Itai Thando Vimbai Sophia Chipo Violet Sally Fadzi |

Those in modern unions (ten) had made no arrangements for the negotiations and those in the semi-modern (nine) and semi-traditional unions (five) were at various stages of the union formation process, some with even only *tsvakirai kuno*⁷ having been paid. But, all participants considered themselves married, or as having been married for those who are no longer in that union. Of the five with completed payments (across the traditional, semi-traditional and semi-modern unions), one was a *kukumbira* marriage, three had started off as an elopement marriage (*kutizisa*) and one was a flight marriage (*kutizira*). The elopement and flight marriages, which eventually involved the bride wealth being paid in full, show how unions can progress from being in a ‘grey area’ to a regularised, more acceptable union. Partial payments made for ten child brides (in semi-traditional and semi-modern unions) remain as partial payments with the balance outstanding – therefore classifying these as ‘ongoing’ unions or ‘unions in progress’, although some were no longer in the union at the time of the interview. According to ordinary Shona-speakers, once some sort of negotiation process has begun, the union no longer qualifies as co-habitation (or *mapoto*) because the families have become involved, and this shows an attempt (at the very least) to convert the *mapoto* union into an unregistered customary union. With that in mind, at the time of the interview, only ten women were classified as co-habiting or had been co-habiting before their unions ended.

⁷*Tsvakirai kuno* means look here (for her). It is a small fee paid to the girl’s family by a go-between. It allows the girl’s family to officially know where she is and this fee is also traditionally viewed as the first step towards the bride wealth negotiations in the case of *kutizisa* and *kutizira* marriages.

Of the respondents in ongoing unions (ten in total), four had entered into an elopement marriage (*kutizisa*), three had eloped in the form of a flight marriage (*kutizira*), and three had begun by first co-habiting (*mapoto*) – with two of these having been sent away from home. With regard to the ten who were in modern unions, four classified themselves as having started off as an elopement marriage (*kutizisa*), one as a flight marriage (*kutizira*), and four as co-habiting (*mapoto*) – with three of these having been forced into this position after being sent away from home. However, in all these ten cases, no negotiation process had ever been commenced; therefore, requiring all ten to be classified as modern unions in the form of *mapoto*. All in all, only one of the child brides (Mercy) was involved in a union which Meekers (1994) would classify as traditional. For Mercy, her bride wealth negotiations had begun and been completed before she was officially handed over to her husband. In other cases, where negotiations were present, these began after the couple was already living together and therefore assumedly already involved in a sexual relationship.

By the time 16 of my participants' unions began (i.e. when they started living together), the traditionally recognised processes of *kutizira* (flight marriage) or *kutizisa* (elopement marriage) had taken place, and these processes are expected typically to be followed by bride wealth negotiations. These corrective actions in the form of bride wealth negotiations, or lack thereof, after the *kutizisa* or *kutizira* processes are what determine whether the union ultimately becomes considered as a modern (co-habitation/*mapoto*), a semi-modern (payment after pregnancy), or a semi-traditional union (payment before pregnancy). However, even though unions in the form of *kutizisa* or *kutizira* are traditionally recognised as ways of entering into marriage because of the corrective measures through which bride wealth is paid thereby normalising these unions, in present-day Zimbabwe it sometimes takes weeks, months or even years for the initial payment in the form of *tsvakirai kuno* to be paid. This excessive delay, involving no forthcoming payment, is what leads to people looking down on these 'modern' unions as, to the outside world, the union resembles co-habitation. At the same time, the couple involved may see their union as one in limbo (or even in progress), waiting to start the progression to an acceptable form – which only occurs once the first instalment of the bride wealth has been paid. The ordinary Zimbabwean is also often unaware that these elopement type marriages were in fact legitimate and accepted ways of entering into marriage historically, as discussed in Chapter 3. What makes the traditional forms of *kutizisa* and *kutizira* different from those existing in present-day

Zimbabwe is that, in the past, *tsvakirai kuno* was paid within a few days of the girl moving in, which quickly transformed the union into one in progress and therefore somewhat acceptable. Drawing the boundary between an accepted elopement type marriage and a *mapoto* union was therefore much easier than it is today. This change in how unions are constructed in terms of the timeframe before an initial payment is made, can be traced to two factors as identified by participants' responses, namely, economic hardships and the unexpected way in which marriage "just happens". A discussion of these factors is woven into later sections.

Although semi-traditional, semi-modern and modern unions are greatly frowned upon by many of the older generation in present-day Zimbabwe, the existence of these unions could possibly be viewed as a reflection of the lengthy character of the marriage process, and perhaps also of the difficulties in obtaining the required *roora* payments. Both these issues were in fact acknowledged in the past, where it was not the least bit unusual for payments to be made over a number of instalments. Additionally, the *kukumbira* form of marriage existed alongside various other culturally-accepted forms of marriage including *kutizisa* (elopement marriage) and *kutema ugariri* (service marriage), which allowed those of a lower economic standing to marry. *Kutema ugariri* saw a man working at his father-in-law's farm for a fixed length of time in exchange for his daughter; and *kutizisa* encouraged the bride to elope to the man's home with the help of her paternal aunts (*anatete*) and his relatives, thus allowing the couple to start living together before the bride wealth had been paid, which simultaneously decreased the father-in-law's negotiating power (Shoko, 2016). *Kutema ugariri* (service marriage) has long been abandoned as labour is no longer of use to in-laws given the monetisation of the economy. Given that service marriage no longer exists in an environment where economic difficulties are increasing, and pre-marital sex amongst young people is resulting in unplanned pregnancies and unexpected family formation, it is no wonder that cases of semi-traditional, semi-modern and modern unions have seemingly increased. This can be viewed as one of the many ways that social change has influenced the life course of marriages as far as establishing families is concerned.

From this discussion, the complexities in categorising Shona marriage are quite evident. In my research, difficulties faced were not only because of the fact that marriage amongst the Shona is often not a singular event-based process. More specifically, these difficulties also arose because of the practical difficulty in classifying cases which could be considered as *kutizisa* and *kutizira*,

and also in categorising cases where children start co-habiting because they have been chased out of the home (which is not something that can be found in historical research on Shona marriage patterns). In theory, *kutizira* (flight marriage) occurs when the girl elopes to the man's home without prior arrangement with her family or the man's family, as the man is either unwilling to marry her or is not present at the time; and *kutizisa* (elopement marriage) traditionally involves the male's knowledge and both families' involvement (Chitakure, 2016).

According to Vijfhuizen (2002), in practice, *kutizira* and *kutizisa* are often confused and used interchangeably in modern times, with many people today not even aware of the fact that they were at some point considered two different practices. My findings support this position, as participants themselves sometimes categorised their marriage incorrectly, including Tatenda who moved to her boyfriend's house with his knowledge and help but regarded her marriage as *kutizira* when it in fact falls under the category of *kutizisa*. She claimed:

"I had been dating this guy and when he came to visit in Karoi one time he said 'I think it's time you now come and live at my home', and I agreed. When I went to his house it was actually in the form of kutizira [flight marriage]. My family found out where I was a little later, when someone told them that the daughter you are looking for is at so-and-so's house. My uncle [paternal aunt's husband] was actually happy about this but my aunt was a little hurt." –Tatenda 20, (06.11.17).

Additionally, in most cases of *kutizisa* (elopement marriage), only the couple was involved and, in some cases of *kutizira* (flight marriage), the girl's family members were aware of her decision (thus deviating from the way these marriages were carried out traditionally). Furthermore, some girls were sent away from home and so their marriages do not really fall into either category, although their partners were more than happy to take them in. Resultantly, while it seems as though four types of marriage (*kutizira*, *kutizisa*, co-habiting and those who were sent away) were identified by my research, some of the experiences encroach on two separate forms of marriage.

The sub-sections below show how I made use of the circumstances around the moment of *kupinda mumba* (entering the home) to overcome this categorisation issue, leading up to my findings which show that: nearly half of my participants (10 out of 25) fell into the category of

kutizisa (elopement marriage); six used the *kutizira* (flight marriage) route of entering into a marriage; three participants seem to have simply moved into a state of co-habitation (with two of these having family members aware of this before it even occurred); and the other five were chased from their own homes and returned to the man's house where they were taken in – according to Jones (2015: 116), this could possibly be closer to *kutizira* as they “run away to” the men. I omit a discussion on traditional *kukumbira* marriages below as only one participant went through this channel and the process of marriage followed that of *kukumbira* marriages (as discussed at length in Chapter 3).

6.3.1.1 *Kutizisa* (elopement marriage)

Traditionally, *kutizisa* took the form of an “elaborate staged kidnapping” where a couple would arrange for the woman to be secretly accompanied to the man's home by one of his relatives (Jones, 2015: 115; Meekers, 1994). The reason behind this was to speed up the union forming process, with the *kutizisa* process only occurring after the woman had informed her paternal aunt of her decision, thus involving both families in the process (Meekers, 1994). My findings show that it is now often the case (in modern times) that, when young people refer to this type of marriage, only the couple is aware of this event and the process is often not done to speed up the negotiation process but to bypass it completely (sometimes for an indefinite period due to a lack of resources). Whilst I cannot be totally certain as to why relatives (usually paternal aunts) are no longer involved in the process, I suggest that this has something to do with extended families being spread out over various geographical locations, thus making it difficult to involve one's relatives. In light of these findings, I therefore refer to *kutizisa* as involving a case where the man encourages his partner to run away from her own home and begin living with him (whether or not the families were involved in the process). Based on this, ten of my participants fell into this category. In three of the cases (Lisa, Mirirai and Mavis), the partner encouraged the woman to elope after she had fallen pregnant. In the other seven cases, the man encouraged the woman to elope even though there was no pregnancy.

This form of marriage is also linked to earlier discussed motivators or drivers of marriage, notably being sweet-talked in the case of Constance, Rudo and Martha; escaping situations of child maltreatment in the case of Itai, Tatenda and Lisa; or escaping poverty as for Thando and Pamela. For the other two girls (Mirirai and Mavis), marriage came about as a form of ‘damage

control' with both of them agreeing to enter an elopement marriage after they fell pregnant. Although Lisa was encouraged to elope because the man wanted to keep his son close, she viewed her decision to agree to this as driven by the neglect she was facing, which is why I note it above as the reason for her elopement marriage.

While these cases were presented as *kutizisa*, only six resulted in any form of payment being made. Of these six, payments were completed for three (namely Rati, Tatenda and Constance). For Lisa, whose marriage has now ended, only *tsvakirai kuno* was paid; and Mavis and Mirirai had both *tsvakirai kuno* and *masungiro* paid, then the payments went no further. Technically, these could be referred to as 'unions in progress'. But, in reality, looking at the context surrounding these unions, calling them such would be inaccurate. For instance, Lisa's marriage ended and the circumstances surrounding the union (discussed in a previous section) implied that her husband had no intention of formalising their union any further. For Mavis and Mirirai, it has been three and two years, respectively, since the initial payments were made and no further discussions have taken place around further payments in the future. One community member made note of the existence of such unions:

"There are two reasons why a man fails to pay the bride wealth. The first is because he cannot afford to and secondly because he doesn't get along with his wife. You'll be seeing that you have no future with the woman so you figure it would be a waste of money... For us to be together, maybe I [the man] would have impregnated her then we start living together and during that time I may lose the desire to be with her – if it was even there to begin with." - Group 3, Male Community Worker, (06.11.17).

To the contrary, Rudo could truly be seen as a more formal form of union in progress as her bride wealth payments to date included groceries and *mavhizhongo*⁸. This is far more than many others get and, although it was unclear as to whether the entire bride wealth was eventually paid for Rudo, she was one of the participants who followed the traditional wedding with a *muchato* (church wedding) a few years down the line, after she had turned 18.

⁸ The respondent defined *mavhizhongo* as special types of food.

6.3.1.2 Kutizira (flight-marriage)

For the purposes of this research, *kutizira* is used to refer to cases where the boy and his family are unaware of the girl's intentions. Six participants fell into the category of *kutizira*. Matilda and Vimbai, who both fell pregnant, both eloped as a method of 'damage control'; Amy did so because of personal moral beliefs around virginity and marriage; Kuda and Tanaka sought to escape from abusive homes; and Fadzi sought to escape from a man to whom she had been pledged.

While these are all considered cases of *kutizira*, in Vimbai's case, her aunt actually knew about the arrangement and accompanied her to her boyfriend's house. As indicated in other ethnographic literature, my research shows that there are indeed cases where the man may refuse to take responsibility for the pregnancy, and this did happen in the case of Matilda whose relatives then had to blackmail the man's family to take her in. In Vimbai's case, the man accepted her without being coerced, but Vimbai ended up in a bad living situation and the union broke down after seven months. In these cases, only Amy had her bride wealth paid; no negotiations were ever conducted for Vimbai and Fadzi; and some form of unspecified payments were made for Kuda and Tanaka. Matilda had *tsvakirai kuno* paid as a courtesy yet her boyfriend did not want her.

6.3.1.3 Co-habitation

Rufaro and Chipu began living with their boyfriends in the form of co-habitation. Rufaro's union was a semi-modern one as part of the bride wealth was paid after she fell pregnant. Before the payment was made, her family had completely disowned her and refused to acknowledge the father of her son as a son-in-law, given that he had not paid any bride wealth. Although Rufaro managed to convince him to pay part of the bride wealth, she never felt like she had been married 'properly'. She was not present when the payments were made, but her family (specifically, father's younger brothers) sent her messages acknowledging the money they had received:

“Yes, I was married at 17 but it wasn't done properly because not all the payments were made. I had told him if you want us to live together you have to pay at least part of the

required bride wealth, so he did that and my dad's young brother and my aunt accepted the money. He also paid masungiro so I could go back home". - Rufaro 20, (03.04.18).

In an alternative arrangement, Chipo just moved in with her boyfriend and later met his relatives. According to Chipo, her husband had the desire to pay her bridewealth but his step-mother got in the way of this – as she ‘asked’ to borrow the money and never repaid it. To date, no payment or arrangement to pay has been made, which makes the union a *mapoto* union. Although no money was ever paid, Chipo considers herself married:

“We just met in Glendale; he lived alone but his parents also lived in Glendale. We started living together then he later took me to meet his relatives... The cousin I had been previously staying with is the one who informed my family that I was now married.” – Chipo 21, (21.02.18).

Although Chipo considered herself married, she also mentioned that marriage is supposed to occur before a woman moves out of her parents’ home, which was not the case in her situation. Rather, she was married while working in a different town and her husband took her from a home she was sharing with her cousin, not her family home.

Itai, who also started her union in the form of co-habitation, was invited to see where her boyfriend lived and she ended up staying there from that day onwards. She explained:

“He had been visiting me a lot and one day he said come and see where I stay. So I went with him and then I just didn’t end up leaving. We had been talking for about a month by then.” – Itai 22, (20.05.18).

6.3.1.4 Sent Away

Jones (2015) argues that the unions in this category, where girls were sent away from home, can be labelled as *kutizira*. However, from my perspective, they are more accurately labelled as arising through co-habitation. Instead of placing these unions into either one of these categories, I decided to separate them into a distinct category given the special circumstances surrounding the formation of the union. Cleo, Sandra and Sophia slept away from home and were told to go back where they had been. In all these cases, the men were quick to accept their partners back and, for Cleo and Sandra, *tsvakirai kuno* was paid soon after this. In Cleo’s case, half of the

roora was also paid two years later as her partner had previously mentioned his intention to marry her and had even asked her not to leave on the day she had visited.

Violet and Sally had been escorted to their boyfriends' houses by family members after it was discovered that they were pregnant. Neither of these girls were consulted about the move as the decision was made unilaterally by their guardians. In both cases, no payments were ever made nor did the men ever mention or show the intention to do so. Both marriages eventually ended without negotiations having been done; in Violet's case this was three children later, while Sally walked away with only one child.

6.3.2 Brief reflection of recorded cases of child marriage

Child marriages amongst my child bride participants presented themselves in various forms. Overall, 24 out of 25 of these marriages started off in the form of unconventional unions as girls took part in some form of elopement or were sent away from their homes. While these elopement unions are often viewed as deviant by laymen, I argue that they are not as deviant as they are made to seem as they have their roots in traditionally-accepted channels of entering into marriage. The perception of elopement marriages as particularly deviant is linked to the way in which these unions have become constructed in post-colonial times. In this context, the next section explores how modern day teachings about marriage influence young people's perceptions of their own unions.

6.4 Child bride perceptions of their unions

Though the child brides initially considered themselves married, as they referred to themselves as wives and their partners as husbands, further probing revealed that many of them actually felt that they were in 'deviant' unions, often in the form of *mapoto*. Even in cases where some payments had been made, as long as the payments were incomplete, they felt that the union was invalid. An explanation of this is embedded in my findings which give the impression that, in growing up and being inducted into society, children are taught about marriage in such a way that only two forms of marriage are presented as legitimate. The first is the unregistered customary union which involves the paying of bride wealth, and the second is the church wedding which is expected to follow the customary marriage procedures. The church wedding is

locally known as *muchato*. The emphasis on a church wedding came about as a result of the incorporation of Christianity into Zimbabweans' everyday life (Chitakure, 2016). In the past, the payment of bride wealth alone was seen as adequate and the full payment of bride wealth resulted in a sense of pride and acceptance by in-laws. In this way, the marriage was validated across the families involved, instead of it being viewed as a similar to a union based on casual sex or prostitution (Mangena & Ndlovhu, 2013). Many marriages therefore went unregistered despite this being required by the 1939 Native Marriages Act (Holleman, 1969).

While some families continue to accept a customary marriage alone in modern-day Zimbabwe, others now insist that the couple has a church ceremony to solemnise the marriage, which acts as a formal outward declaration that two are indeed now married (Chiwome, 1994). For many ordinary Zimbabweans, the latter is often the only type of marital union worthy of registration and it is only once marriage is performed as a rite in the form of a religious (or civil) ceremony that an authentic marriage can come into existence. This seemed to be the perspective of many of the studied child brides who longed not only to have the customary procedures fully followed but to also have the public celebration in the form of the religious ceremony.

The probing of child brides who had 'unions in progress' revealed dissatisfaction with the ways in which the customary procedures had been handled in terms of the paying of the bride wealth. Some even appeared bitter and said that, given their full bride wealth had not been paid, they are (or were) in fact not married, despite outside appearances to the contrary. This leads to these young women to still feel like outsiders, with their union not being fully accepted in the long run either by their parents or by their in-laws. As Sandra and Rufaro argued:

"I feel like I wasn't married properly according to our customs. He didn't ask for my hand from my family and even after I was forced to elope he didn't pay the full bride wealth which makes me feel like an illegitimate wife. I feel like there is a disconnection between me and his family." – Sandra 24, (20.05.18).

"Being married well, in the proper way, involves a list of groceries to be given to the girl's family. I'm not sure what else is supposed to happen during the process, but I know that the man is supposed to get lists from the woman's family and this is what I would have also

liked to happen in my case. This was my heart's desire; so in fact I was actually just co-habiting" – Rufaro20, (03.04.18).

In such cases, the importance of customary procedures is acknowledged, but this is not to say the desire for a religious ceremony disappears. The former is considered important in terms of its effect on family relationships and the sense of belonging whilst the latter is deemed important for legal reasons. Both processes are therefore important in achieving different desires. Interestingly enough, just as the child brides had said, the community workers were also convinced that these partial payments mean that the couple is not married. One community worker thus claimed:

"Marriage is rooted in paying bride wealth; this is what determines one's marital status. Some marriages in this community shouldn't even be considered marriages because no bride wealth was paid. But we end up just calling them that because we see the couple living together for a long time and even starting to have children." – Group 1, Female Community Worker 4, (22.08.17).

However, it is also a fact that, even with *kukumbira* marriages, it is often difficult to identify when a couple is actually married unless the entire bride price is paid, which often does not happen. As two community workers observed, though not with specific reference to *kukumbira* marriages specifically:

"In most cases where people get married here, they don't do it the right way. The man doesn't even pay much; he usually only pays tsvakirai kuno which some people here call mbonano and it's only about \$10-\$20. These payments occur after some form of elopement and allow for the girl and the man to set foot at her family's house for negotiations. But this then doesn't usually happen because people don't have the money." – Group 1, Female Community Worker 6, (22.08.17).

"The truth is looking at reality on the ground many people, even older ones, get married but never make any payments. They even have kids together and you find that there even comes the time when the wife dies and the bride wealth still hasn't been paid." – Group 3, Male Community Worker 5, (06.11.17).

The sheer complexities of the marrying process amongst the Shona come into play here, as some Shona people believe that it is rude to pay off the entire cost of the bride wealth all at once, as this would imply that the bride wealth amount was too low. There is even a Shona proverb that declares that a son-in-law's job is never done.

Even though it is true that “*mukwasha muonde haaperi kudyiwa*” (‘the son-in-law is a fig tree you never stop eating from’), it is impossible to deny that – in contemporary Zimbabwe – there are cases where, without the full bride wealth payments, a marriage is not recognised by families (particularly the woman's family who views her as single). This affects the ways in which the marriage is experienced, as the couple will not receive family support when they face problems. This also means, at least plausibly, that any children born within the union belong to the woman's father, and the husband has no say in their upbringing (Chiweshe, 2016). As much as this is traditionally accepted, present-day realities often turn out to be different. This is because, currently, some mother's families reject children born in such marriages and some parents intervene in times of hardship even when marriages are ‘illegitimate’.

6.5 Chapter Conclusion

The drivers of child marriage are considerably more complex than they have been made to seem by literature which indiscriminately marks child marriage as a custom, tradition, institution, or religious or cultural practice simply because it exists as a collective practice. This chapter, with the use of the social norms perspective, reviewed some of the different ways in which child marriage can be sustained as a collective practice, which included the pursuit of self and other regarding preferences and personal moral beliefs. Although marriages in my research were often based on a sort of intentional cost-benefit analysis, the chapter shows – much like Jones' (2015) research – that young people more broadly rarely plan for their marriages; instead, it is something that ‘just happens’ without serious preparation. Marriages in modern-day Zimbabwe are often because of an unplanned pregnancy, which then results in the couple opting for or being pushed into alternative unions (as these are more often than not the only options they have):

“Falling pregnant is not something I wanted at the time, it just happened and I had to accept it. I knew about contraceptives but I didn't know where to find them and my boyfriend didn't want to get me any.” - Rufaro 20, (03.04.18).

The difficult position into which child brides are driven is also often the result of the commercialisation of *roora*, along with the unfavourable economic conditions in Zimbabwe which make it difficult for men to raise money for bride wealth. In the past, loopholes (such as labour marriage) existed for those without enough money to marry. The modern-day ‘deviant’ unions can in some cases therefore be seen as the modern equivalent to these earlier loopholes which have since ceased to exist. In fact, given the circumstances that often surround the transition into child bride marital unions, which tend to be unplanned or unexpected, it is no wonder that the *kukumbira* channel is not followed. It is my opinion that these ‘unconventional’ unions are here to stay and, instead of being fixated on the state of marriage and the family unit as these existed in the past, Zimbabweans must accept the changes that have been an inevitable part of broader social change. This social change, and its impact on youth sexuality, marriage and family life, is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7: CHILD MARRIAGE IN RELATION TO POST-COLONIAL FAMILY TRANSITIONS

7.1 Introduction

As I read through my interview transcripts in an attempt to understand each of the narrated experiences of child marriage as part of a larger picture, it crossed my mind that perhaps Zimbabwe's child marriage crisis may in part have arisen due to the failure of Zimbabweans to adapt to post-colonial transitions with regard to the family unit. As stated by Malao, "the basic unit in ... African society is the family... If the centre – which is the family – collapses, then the rest of the concentric circles which are clearly related to the inner concentric circle equally become degraded" (1994: 14). While I would not go as far as to say that the Shona family arrangement has gone through some form of collapse, in this chapter I do posit that the reconfiguring of the family structure has led to changes which have undercut critical family functions as well as the pull and significance of *hunhu*, both of which played crucial roles in social organisation in pre-colonial times. I argue that this restructuring of the family unit alongside changes in social consciousness (with reference to *hunhu*) lie at the root of the prevalence of child marriage, beyond other driving forces as well. I explore this idea through an analysis of my study findings in the light of family transitions over the years. I argue that this transition of the family and the undercutting of *hunhu* have over time resulted in young people and their families making misguided decisions around child marriage. Here we see the results of changes in spiritual consciousness (i.e. the *hunhu*) which Jonge (1981) stated a muShona could never exist without (cited in Chiwome, 1994: 63).

While the sociological study of families has been conducted from various perspectives throughout history, this chapter seeks to analyse families (and changes in families) from the perspective of both form and function. As such, the chapter explores social organisation (and education) amongst the Shona, focusing specifically on the family, showing the ways in which changes in the family structure (or form) and function could possibly be behind the continuing high rates of child marriage in a context where it has been proven to be harmful and unwanted.

In doing this, I make use of certain older but seminal texts which I view as crucial for an accurate analysis of the changes that have occurred over time.

7.2 Family transitions

According to Unterhalter (1961), “families the world over came into existence because they meet fundamental human needs” which include the creation of lasting sexual relationships, natal care, childcare and socialisation (1961:56). The specific manner in which these needs are met in and through families differs across societies and over time. The family then exists in all societies across the globe, in different forms that reflect the societal changes within a particular context and time period (Chirozva, Mubaya & Mukamuri, 2007). Family transitions were first systematically studied by Le Play (1855), who “was one of the pioneering social scientists who argued that society was changing under the influence of urbanisation and industrialisation” (cited in Puschmann & Solli, 2014:1). Although some of his work has been rightly criticised over the years, there are also aspects of his work that still inform the work of academics today, including his belief that social and economic factors drive family transitions and his system of organising family types (Thorton, 2005; Puschmann & Solli, 2014).

In his work, Le Play distinguished between three types of families that lay on a continuum. Though the terms he used for these three types might be considered problematic, nevertheless he spoke about the patriarchal, stem and unstable families (cited in Thorton, 2005). Most studies in the past have made reference to the first and third types of families which are widely acknowledged today as being the most common forms of family. These two types of families are associated with subsistence-based and wage-labour economies, respectively. Unterhalter (1961) refers to the first type of family as the consanguine family as it is based on kinship groups, this is what is in modern times referred to as the extended family. Likewise, he refers to the third type of family as the conjugal or biological family as it is the result of links created by childbearing, and this today is often known as the nuclear family. Stem families, which are hardly considered in literature, are families which are at a sort of midpoint between patriarchal and unstable families. In stem families the eldest married son lives with his family and grandparents, with the grandfather holding the role of head of the house, which upon his death is passed on to his son along with the family plot (Georgas, 2003).

According to Unterhalter (1961), “each society works out (although not consciously) that type of family organisation which is best suited to its way of life” (1961: 56). In all ‘traditional’(i.e. pre-colonial African) societies, which were subsistence-based rural agricultural communities, the kinship-based extended family structure existed and flourished as the common form of social organisation (Unterhalter, 1961).

The consanguine family generally played the following roles (Unterhalter, 1961: 57; Chirozva, Mubaya & Mukamuri, 2007; Magezi, 2018):

- Economic – “joint family enterprise, usually farming, in which all members of family participate”. Both resources and earnings are considered as belonging to the family and not individuals.
- Childcare – this was a group function where grandparents, aunts and uncles shared the child rearing responsibility with parents. Procreation was encouraged as more children meant more labour and a greater agricultural yield.
- Education – this was mostly carried out by family members.
- Recreation – this was mostly carried out within the family.
- Religion – this was a family function especially where religion was rooted in ancestral worship where each family’s ancestors provide protection. Spiritual rituals, norms and values were shared and respected by all family members.
- Security –the family was generally responsible for providing physical, social and emotional support which includes caring for the aged, orphaned and the infirm.

As society changed due to industrialisation, the family as a system had to adapt to these changes. The consanguine family structure was negatively affected by industrialisation and the development of urban areas, which caused it to weaken and in some cases completely break down. This is said to be because of the idea that it is extremely difficult to maintain this family structure without the economic basis for its existence (Puschmaan & Solli, 2014). A growing emphasis on individual rights (rather than communal rights) and the emancipation of women also led to the decline in this family structure, at least in urban spaces (Jeater, 1993); though this does not imply that the ‘modern’ family is necessarily any less patriarchal. As a result of these adaptations, the small nuclear family unit, which is seen as better suited for urban conditions because of its ease of mobility and less use of resources, emerged (Unterhalter, 1961; Bourdillon,

1993; Pushmann & Solli, 2014). These changes did not occur abruptly but instead occurred over time, with many families often struggling to complete the transition between the two, due in part to internal tensions and conflicts brought about by continuing expectations held by extended family members. In some cases, it was even the family's intentional attempt to hold onto traditional beliefs and values, whilst attempting to live a life suitable to urban spaces that led to families being suspended in a state of transition, living what Magezi (2016: 83) refers to as “a life in the in-between”.

The structure and functions of the conjugal family are quite different from the extended family, with the extended family fostering emotional and material interdependence amongst kinsmen while the conjugal family fosters independence (Georgas *et al*, 2001). The conjugal family unit is made up of parents and their children, and hardship can result if other relatives begin to live with or depend upon the nuclear family (Bourdillon, 1993; Magezi, 2018). The number of children are kept low to allow for social mobility and, compared to kinship-based marriages, these families result more fully from individual choices and romantic love (Russell, 2002). This makes this form of marriage often less stable and likely to dissolve if the desire for love and emotional satisfaction cease to exist and be met.

One of the most important differences between the conjugal and extended family is that the former is less inclined to exist as an economic unit, with earnings not combined necessarily as a family unit in the extended sense (Utenhalter, 1961; Magezi, 2018). Thus, where members of different nuclear families co-operate together in economic ways this is purely voluntary; likewise, parents tend to be no longer responsible for their children once they start their own families (Bourdillon, 1993). Educational, recreational and religious needs are also often outsourced as they are considered too complex to be met by the family unit. These changes are common to societies as they transition between different regimes of production (notably, from pre-capitalist to capitalist) and this can also be found amongst the Shona of Zimbabwe. These features are now explored with the Shona specifically in mind.

7.3 Pre-colonial social organisation amongst the Shona

As we think about culture and the ways in which traditional family forms and functions are linked to culture, it is important to keep in mind the fact that culture is not static but fluid and

dynamic. In the same way that cultural changes are influenced by the social and material environment (and vice versa at times as well), so is the family influenced and required to adapt to mirror the changes throughout the rest of society (Magezi, 2018).

In pre-colonial times, social organisation amongst the Shona rested firmly on the fact that their way of life was based on subsistence agriculture supplemented by trade of surplus crops and other products (Bourdillon, 1993). This dependence on agriculture created fertile ground for the extended family to flourish. The family during that time was regarded as “a socio-economic group of people who were related to one another by both blood and marriage” (Hatendi 1973, cited in Chiwome, 1994). Being a patrilineal society, “a group of men who were descended through males from a common ancestor perhaps three or four generations back saw themselves as a unit” and, in social situations, each patrilineage worked corporately as a unit (Mitchell, 1961: 2). The members of each unit lived in close proximity to each other, which is a key reason why such social organisation came into being.

The lineage was replenished through procreation as marriages were instituted “to transfer the genetricial rights in a woman from her patrilineal group to that of her husband” (Mitchell, 1961: 3; Foster *et al.*, 1997). These genetricial rights were held not by an individual but corporately by the woman’s patrilineage (if she was unmarried) and by her husband’s patrilineage should she be married. These rights therefore continued to exist even after the death of one of the spouses, and this had great significance when it came to the handling of orphans and widows. In this regard, African marriage was clearly between kin groups and not individuals, which meant that children were absorbed into the extended family and a woman could be “inherited” by a kinsman. This was usually a brother or cousin and the group could continue to claim rights over the children borne within the new union. This system of transferring genetricial rights to a group and not an individual possibly had a positive effect on the stability of marriage, as the strong ties between children and their father’s patrilineal group also bound their mother strongly to her husband’s lineage (Mitchell, 1961; Holleman, 1969; Chitakure, 2016). Divorce was discouraged and, given that marriage was more about kinship than personal feelings, this helped to keep people together.

The term ‘family’ therefore went beyond the immediate or nuclear family and this was also shown by the names⁹ given to extended family members as well as their roles (Kanjo, 1994; Chirozva, Mubaya & Mukamuri, 2007). For example, if the father had brothers, his children referred to them as *babamukuru* (big father) or *babamunini* (small father) depending on whether they were older or younger than the man in question. This is also true for all other men he called brother, i.e. cousins. A father’s father was referred to as *sekuru* and so were “all his brothers and all men of his clan and age” (Samkange & Samkange, 1980: 72). Similarly, a mother’s sisters were referred to as *amaiguru* (big mother) and *amainini* (small mother). This rule also applied to all those she called sisters. This extended family was considered very advantageous as everyone played a role in helping a couple to raise and educate their children. Hence, child rearing was “a corporate responsibility belonging to all and not just the father or the mother of this child”(Samkange & Samkange, 1980: 72).

In this context, the traditional safety net which absorbed children was in the form of aunts and uncles, with grandparents being a second line of defence if the first failed (Foster, 2000). Widows on the other hand were also retained as a part of their deceased husband’s kinship network and single mothers were retained in their father’s lineage (Jeater, 1993; Foster, 2000). Proceeding from this, then, there were no destitute orphans as children were “inherited” by their father’s or mother’s relatives, who were also called mother or father. Immediate and extended families did not shy away from the care of orphans as this responsibility was expected, and family members had allegiance to both their immediate families and their entire kin group (Kanjo, 1994; Foster *et al*, 1997; Ganga & Chinyoka, 2010). This type of social organisation (which had parallels elsewhere in Africa) was not only acknowledged but praised by L.S.B Leakey, a well-known anthropologist working in Kenya.

In a speech Leakey gave to an audience at Cambridge University in 1961, he praised African ‘tribes’, which were often seen as inferior in comparison to the so-called rising civilisation of colonialism and modernity. In his speech, he in fact referred to African tribes as superior in certain respects to these rising ‘civilisations’ because “before the coming of the white man, social organisation in many African tribes was such that tragedies such as destitute widows and

⁹ While these names are still used in present-day Zimbabwe, the roles played by extended family members have been influenced by social changes as discussed below.

orphans, unloved lonely spinsters, unmarried mothers, aged and uncared for elderly people were unheard of and indeed could not occur, while prostitution was unknown” (cited in Samkange & Samkange, 1980: 33). For Samkange and Samkange (1980), this quote is the embodiment of the concept of *hunhu* which was embedded in the very fabric of the Shona people and in the form (or structure) of the family. Communities were guided by this principle of morality and families were arranged around functions that were based on *hunhu*. This therefore kept the community living in a favourable state even though the codes of morals and norms were not stipulated in any formal sense (Kanjo, 1994). While *hunhu* is still said to exist in modern Zimbabwe, the evolution of the family unit has led to, for instance, the proliferation of child abuse and neglect along with an increase in the need for orphanages.

In pre-colonial times, when a man died, his wife remained at his family home as she would have been living there with the rest of his kinsmen. The wife would have been assigned fields too and her children were the responsibility of her husband’s lineage. She would continue to work the fields and her late husband’s brothers would look after not only the children but her as well. In some cases, she would be re-married to one of the kinsmen, particularly if she was still fairly young and still able to bear children (Bourdillon, 1993). The strain on families taking care of orphans was cushioned by the fact that, although individual ownership of resources such as cattle existed, a strong co-operative arrangement was in place and collective resources (which could be used by everyone in the village) also existed (Samkange & Samkange, 1980).

As well, poverty in general was addressed by the distribution of ‘state’ resources (such as those coming from and through chiefs and headmen) to cater for the needs of particularly vulnerable villagers. Fields which were allocated for the growing of crops used to feed the less fortunate members of society were referred to as *zunde ramambo* which translated to the chief’s fields (Matshalaga, 2004). No individuals therefore found themselves in dire need or unable to look after their family. This material co-operation was expected not only within the greater community but in families more specifically as well. In the family system, this co-operation included helping kinsmen and providing financial support where needed. In exchange for these demands placed on individual members of the family was the security generated through the support of the extended family. The decline of the extended family therefore came along with significant changes and loss of security by members of families (Bourdillon, 1993).

Another aspect of family life that was particularly important to the social organisation of the Shona was that of sexuality. In pre-colonial times, sexuality was viewed in a more positive than negative light (Gelfand, 1976). While individuals were held accountable for their sexual behaviour, sexuality was actually corporately ‘owned’ and controlled by the kinship group. Sex was considered as family property, such that a person’s body ultimately belonged to his or her family group (rather than belonging to the person concerned). This is why paternal relatives were responsible for sexual instruction and also conducted virginity tests to ensure that young girls were not “making independent use of their sexuality” (Jeater, 1993: 30). Meanwhile, men were educated about sex by other men in their kin group. The role of paternal relatives in sexual education was carried out without much trouble given the close proximity they had to their nieces and nephews (Gelfand, 1976). Seeing that sex itself was considered quite important, detailed training by paternal aunts was given to betrothed girls nearing marriage. The extensive sex education received by young people was more of a practical nature (compared to, say, the biological type of education given in British schools). Training included various sexual positions as paternal aunts were held responsible should the girl later fail to satisfy her husband (Jeater, 1993).

Not only was education passed down by a girl’s patrilineal kin but the kin played as well a supervisory role of keeping an eye on their behaviour (Gelfand, 1976; Mushunje, 2014). The entire community was likewise involved in raising children and so anyone could discipline a young person caught misbehaving. Overall, “the regulation of desire was fundamental to the perpetuation of family authority” (Jeater, 1993: 31). The regulation of sexuality in this context “did not depend on a system of inflexible prohibitive rules”; and girls who fell pregnant out of wedlock “did not step over an absolute line, but put in motion a procedure whereby the transgression could be absorbed through the negotiation of compensation of bride wealth payment from the lover’s family” (Jeater, 1993: 30). Sexual relationships were in a way permitted as long as they led to marriage. However, this was not forced and where marriage did not occur, the genitricial rights remained with the woman’s patrilineal kin.

Given the links between sexual identity and lineage, sexual relationships needed to be acknowledged and approved of by lineages before they occurred, such that the absence of this consent led to the sexual encounter being viewed as a sexual offence. It was believed that one

could not engage in any secret or illicit sexual activity as family members would likely find out particularly through “illness attributed to ancestral intervention”, which would indicate one’s guilt, thus making it impossible to keep the experience a secret (Jeater, 1993: 37). In fact, illicit sexual encounters were considered highly dangerous as they were not approved of by ancestors, and therefore “a dangerous mixing of blood would take place” (Jeater, 1993: 28; Kesby, Gwanzura-Ottmoller & Chizororo, 2006). The only way that sexual relationships were permitted and viewed in a non-threatening light was through marriage rituals which were believed to open “the way for the ancestral worlds of different lineages involved to come safely into contact” (Jeater, 1993: 28).

Boys and girls were also generally kept apart, doing different types of chores, which kept them busy and less likely to get into trouble. But, there are cases where girls found themselves pregnant. The girl’s family would respond not by stigmatising the girl and her child as is commonly done today but by accepting them as part of the family (Bourdillon, 1993; Samkange & Samkange, 1980). This meant that, in such a context, there was no stigma attached to unmarried mothers. Further, children were not considered “illegitimate” as they were absorbed into their mother’s family and shielded from being branded negatively for a matter which was no fault of their own, but simply because they were born out of wedlock (Samkange & Samkange, 1980).

As colonisers came in and industrialisation was underway, the way of life shifted towards an increasingly wage-labour based existence, with cash incomes from labour being supplemented by cash from trading or the sale of crops. The changes linked to colonialism affected every aspect of life, particularly the family unit which is regarded as the basic unit of life in Africa (Kanjo, 1994; Magezi, 2018).

7.4 Post-colonial social organisation amongst the Shona

Economic, social, religious and political changes, which were a result of white settlers’ arrival and conquest, shook the foundations of indigenous community life as colonialism extended its reach over time. As the most basic social institution, and one which is highly sensitive to social change, the family became subject to increasing economic, social and political pressures (Chiwome, 1994).

As the army of occupation made its way into (what became known as) Southern Rhodesia and defeated an indigenous revolt, it also came with white settlers who sought mining claims and the appropriation of land. There was, with time, a drive to ‘modernise’ indigenous people by incorporating them (at least in part) into the colonial (increasingly capitalist) economy as commodified wage-labourers; while simultaneously constructing and maintaining a Native Reserve system. Although there was considerable and often successful resistance to wage-labour, particularly at the time when the Reserves could provide an alternative livelihood basis, the state’s economic and political policies acted to compel people into the wage-labour system in the mines, and increasingly in manufacturing in growing cities and towns. The sheer alienation of land and the resettlement of indigenous people into the Reserves, along with the draconian range of taxes (such as hut tax) imposed upon them, meant that indigenous people turned to wage-labour to survive. Indeed, the taxes often had to be paid in cash, and this led even young men to leave the rural areas in search of employment in urban centres (Jeater, 1993; Schmidt, 1992).

The emergence and consolidation of wage labour affected the extended family and the stability of the controls held by the lineage in four ways that are relevant to this study. Firstly, migration to towns to work for money affected the economic aspect of rural family life, as each individual now used their own labour to gain an individual income, which their kin had not played a role in and to which they were not necessarily entitled. Secondly, the distance between the migrants and the rest of their kin, be they back home in the Reserves or in other towns, began to weaken links between families due to the limited interactions. Thirdly, by earning individually, young men began to realise that they could raise their own bride wealth and need not rely on submissive relationships with the lineage head or head of the household to help with acquiring the necessary cattle for bride wealth. Lastly, life in towns was very different from that of the rural areas where people generally knew each other and kin could easily play a role in policing behaviour. Instead, in towns, young people could be anonymous and carve out new ways of living as no established rules existed on how one was to live (Schmidt, 1992; Jeater, 1993; Foster *et al*, 1997; Magezi, 2018).

7.4.1 From co-operation to individualism

As urbanisation continued apace in what is now Zimbabwe (particularly after the 2nd World War), and as it led to wage-labour based not only on the migrant labour system but also involved

more and more the movement of both men and women into towns, the extended family network increasingly began to suffer. Many men and women moved to the towns, separating from their family back home. While some visited their rural homes here and there, over generations some completely lost touch with their extended families. In the townships as well, there was an increase in the ownership of private property based on an individualist ethic (Mushunje, 2014; Magezi, 2018). People no longer pooled together their resources including their labour but now each individual made use of their own labour to work and receive payment in cash. This shift in how society was structured strained those who still had ties back home, as it became harder to share the outcomes of one's labour with those who had played no part. Social organisation began to shift away from the extended family to a nuclear family headed by two adults who take care of their children. The nuclear family emerged because it was more suited for a capitalist society (particularly in urban spaces) where living space was restricted and each adult made a living from the individual use of his or her labour. This change is what saw the move away from a socio-economic unit based on blood or marriage and the erosion of the previously strong social aspect of family (Chiwome, 1994).

7.4.2 Disintegration of the extended family

In effect, each individual became “the centre-point of an ever-ramifying network of personal kinship connections traced through the mother, father, wife or children indiscriminately” (Mitchell, 1961: 8). The introduction of, and emphasis on, monogamy also had a role to play in weakening the extended family, as the concept of family took on a nuclear understanding of a husband, wife and a few children instead of how it was viewed traditionally: as being made up of a clan with many fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, grandparents, sisters, brothers and children (Chiwome, 1994). Furthermore, practices that drove the “inheritance” of widows and orphans were eroded as they were incompatible with Christianity (which became increasingly popular from the 1930s), which viewed this arrangement as tantamount to adultery and also infringed on the widow's freedom and choice to live freely after the death of a husband (Magezi, 2018). The result of this trend was the alienation of married women from their husband's extended family. In this setting, “the communalistic philosophy was replaced by the view that inheritance ameliorated the material circumstances of these brothers and cousins who, in the past, would have inherited responsibilities rather than a fortune” (Chiwome, 1994: 74). Male relatives

ultimately found relief from the responsibility of raising the deceased's children, a duty which in the past was largely responsible for children successfully reaching adulthood (Chiwome, 1994). Taking care of the dead man's wife was also no longer expected and, in this sense, all that was left to inherit were his material possessions (which in some cases left children and widows with nothing).

7.4.3 The effect of family transition on youth sexuality

As the extended family functions began to crumble, the educational and religious functions also began to disintegrate. More specifically, as individuals migrated to the towns and there was an increased need for semi-skilled and skilled labour in the capitalist economy, the formal education system (which was introduced by the British colonial system) moved in and took over the function of taking care of children during the day, and also educated them around matters that were the family's responsibility in the past (Foster *et al*, 1997). Over the years, the growing emphasis on self-development and self-determination – which was driven by the modern education system – took root. Children competed with each other in schools and were encouraged to come out on top so that they could obtain the best opportunities and thus give their future children the best lives possible. This led to a new generation of adults focused on individual success and the nuclear family, with individual success sometimes coming at the expense of the family's wellbeing. This was because decisions were made on the basis of “a kind of rationality that calculates the most economical or efficient means to a given end with scant regard for human or other moral consequences” (Mason, 2001 cited in Mungwini, 2011: 784, Chiwome, 1994).

According to Chiwome (1994), individualism was allowed to thrive because aunts and uncles, who initially stabilised the family and society through informal education, had made the mistake of believing that the formal education system was equipped to not only prepare children for life in the colonial world but to also “impart both knowledge and wisdom” (1994: 62). This false belief resulted in a gap in the education and socialisation of children as schools prepared them for their (mostly subservient) economic roles in the colonial system but did not take into account the significance of education for continued harmonious existence within the community. However, even where these relatives may have wanted to play a role in education, the distance between kinsmen made this challenging if not impossible in some cases (Bourdillon, 1993).

As Christianity was passed on to younger generations in schools (often mission schools initially), a gap emerged between them and the older generations as the latter were harder to convert, thus leading to generations with different religious beliefs (Chiwome, 1994). Ultimately the school-going children, particularly those who were enrolled in boarding schools, continued to drift far away from their families. This had a significant impact on the level of control which the family and kin group had on their lives, which weakened the family structure and overall conformity to traditional societal values (Chiwome, 1994). Additionally, kinsmen ceased to have as great an interest in the lives of children as they did in rural societies in earlier years. Their rights and responsibilities dropped and children's positions in town stood solely on their personal ability to succeed (Mitchell, 1961).

Education was used alongside Christianity as “weapons” with which to not only conquer the indigenous people but also to transform the lives of Africans “from their so called primitive forms into a modern one” (Mungwini, 2011: 776; Chiwome, 1994). In this respect, the earlier family functions, which were replaced by the formal education system, were not only linked to the general teaching of young people and the nurturing of their spirituality, as they were also at the core of youth sexuality. Sadly, the new schooling system, which was closely linked to Christianity and strict Victorian views of sex, did not take on the role of sex education in an effective manner as teachings emphasised abstinence and did not provide additional information beyond this; this therefore created silence around sexual matters.

Missionaries came in with the intention of converting the Shona and saving them from their “backward” and “savage” ways of living that apparently encouraged immoral behaviour, for example by openly discussing sexual issues. Instead of the openness once experienced around sexual matters, these issues became presented as taboo and, as people were converted, they too took on this perception of sexuality. Thus, “[v]irginity and other values which controlled African sexual life ceased to be celebrated collectively” and instead became individual matters, with virginity being the property of the woman who became solely accountable for it (Chiwome, 1994). Abstinence and sexual control were emphasised, creating gaps in sexual knowledge as not much more information was offered beyond these issues. According to Jeater (1993), this silence around sexual matters is what resulted in a *laissez-faire* attitude known as *madiro* as far as youth sexuality is concerned. The term *madiro* can be translated to mean ‘doing whatever you want

without regard for anyone else'. This shift in youth attitudes, along with the new environment where young people lived in high density areas in towns, made for a toxic cocktail. This is because young people came into contact with people of the opposite sex while under the anonymity offered by urban settlements, and they could express sexual and other forms of freedom without raising concern from near-by kinsmen (Mitchell, 1961; Jeater, 1993).

In general, moral relationships which previously controlled behaviour no longer existed and European ideas on gender relations and gender identities, which were coming to the fore, were unable to control the emerging sexuality of the youth (Mitchell, 1961; Jeater, 1993). The church attempted to intervene but, given the interaction of young people with the church only a few times a week, these attempts had limited success: "The lofty idea of church was retrieved for use only on Sunday and other church days when people suspended worldly activities" (Chiwome 1994: 62). In the everyday lives of the youth, the church could not maintain significant control and their elders (even if available) could not complement church efforts given their different views on the matter (Jeater, 1993; Chiwome, 1994). This separation between religious and secular life had serious repercussions as, previously, self-discipline along with the society's social, economic, psychological and physical well-being, were dependent "on family cohesion which was enshrined in religious ritual" (Chiwome, 1994: 63). Because of the social changes, sexual contact could now take place between individuals and not lineages. With sex being divorced from larger social relationships, women also realised that sex was actually a commodity which made for a very lucrative business, as least potentially (Jeater, 1993).

7.4.4 Linking family transition to child marriage

As individualism gained more emphasis, social achievement became signified by the accumulation of property. This was incompatible with the traditional values of sharing and hospitality, as sharing and the extension of hospitality towards extended family and community members got in the way of maximising assets; additionally, people began to interpret the possession of goods as an indicator of moral wealth (Chiwome, 1994). Over time, being hospitable and taking care of orphaned children or other extended family members in need became a burden given that nuclear family resources did not take care of large numbers of people (Bourdillon, 1993; Mushunje, 2014; Gomba, 2018). Even where a family may have the genuine

desire to help, it might be unable to do so because of financial constraints, and this could result in tensions.

In the context of contemporary Zimbabwe, as the economic situation has declined severely this century, so has the responsibility and commitment to taking care of orphaned children. This though, I argue, is not only because of the economic burden of having extra mouths to feed. It is also because of the fact that, currently, in as much as people may still refer to relatives as father, mother, brother or sister, the relationship with these relatives is now quite distinct from the relationship one has with members of the nuclear family (Chirozva, Mubaya & Mukamuri, 2007; Mushunje, 2014). Sheer distance is an important factor here. Different nuclear family units, although from the same patrilineage, may see each other occasionally if at all, and financial support is not expected from other units as resources and property are not owned corporately. Each unit caters to their own financial needs using their individual incomes. Refusal to share wealth with extended family members, in preference for preserving individual wealth, can however create conflict as families are often still expected to live up to ‘traditional’ value systems (Magezi, 2018). This is despite the fact that the entire socio-economic structure on which these systems were pinned has for the most part disintegrated (Bourdillon, 1993).

Bourdillon (1993) cited a study carried out in Ghana which shows that the only way this tension and conflict could be avoided by married couples in urban spaces was by making a joint decision to prioritise the nuclear family, often thus excluding the distant kin. Assistance may be offered occasionally, but bearing in mind that obligations are to the nuclear family first and foremost. According to Chirozva, Mubaya and Mukamuri (2017), these findings also hold weight in similar African societies, Zimbabwe included. Indeed, even amongst the Shona, most urban families find that their extended family members are more of a burden than a financial help. Chirozva, Mubaya and Mukamuri (2017) further argue that even in rural areas, the growing emphasis on independence and individual wage labour require husbands and wives to work together to build up their household which results in obligations being held primarily between couples and not towards the extended family as a whole (Chirozva, Mubaya & Mukamuri, 2017). In these instances, Zimbabweans are aware of the expectations placed on them through *hunhu* but, in reality, many end up resenting those for whom they are required (by culture) to take care.

This is how issues of child abuse and neglect began, as old ideals clash harshly with new realities (Bourdillon, 1993; Magezi, 2006; Mushunje, 2014).

As discussed earlier, some of the child brides studied were abused by their guardians in the form of extended family members because of this clash. Family members longed to pass on the care and responsibility to someone else and this was evident in the way the children were treated. This aversion to absorbing children presented itself not only before some of the child brides were married, as after their marriages had ended as well, they were left alone as young single mothers with no family to turn to. Some relatives in fact verbalised their desire to pass on the responsibility that had been laid upon them. In the case of Itai, before she turned to marriage her abusive maternal grandfather kept referring to his grandchildren as the responsibility and property of the sons-in-law, yet these men had never actually paid any bride wealth and therefore had no genetricial rights. In Tatenda's case, her relatives rejected her and her child after she attempted to return to both her father's and her mother's lineage after her marriage ended. In total, eight of my participants married to escape from neglect or abuse faced while living with extended family members. Though some lived with extended family members because they had lost one or both parents, others had been taken in because of the re-marriage of their parents which left them without a family into which they could fit.

In the contemporary Zimbabwean society, where individual rights and interests seem to trump all else, divorce and the separation of couples has also become common (Chirozva, Mubaya & Mukamuri, 2007). Given that lineage controls have weakened and marriage is no longer based on building strong and lasting bonds between entire family groups (and not just individuals), divorce is viewed as a personal affair which does not have a significant impact on social relationships as the kin are simply supporters of each individual. Although this gives individuals more freedom, it also creates situations where divorce is more likely to have a greater psychological impact on children, as the extended family may not be there to soften the blow by continuing to stand as a village, absorbing the children into a continued stable structure (Mitchell, 1961; Foster *et al*, 1997).

In line with the issue of the current position of children in families, marriage payments nowadays seem to speak more to attempting to ensure the woman's good behaviour than confer rights over children, as the money can be paid back should the woman commit adultery. Children are

therefore not necessarily taken in by their father's lineage and, in many cases, end up in the care of the mother or her relatives (Foster *et al*, 2007). Additionally, according to the traditions which underlie marriage customs and the relevance of the bride wealth payment, when a woman ends a marriage and later remarries, it is sometimes difficult for her to take her children into her new marriage as it is expected that the genetricial rights would remain with their father and his lineage. Today, a new husband may therefore be unwilling to take in another man's children into his home, as traditionally they are not viewed as his responsibility. Sadly, men who remarry also find it difficult to continue raising their own children, as their new wives may also be reluctant to care for children who are considered another woman's responsibility.

This reality is one that was taken into consideration in pre-colonial times where a woman passed away. Such a woman could, before her death, select one of her sisters or relatives to replace her as a wife so as to have someone she knows look after her children; instead of leaving them to be possibly taken care of by an unrelated step-mother in the future. The process of 'replacing' this woman was known as *chimutsa mapfiwa/bondwe* and was not uncommon as marriage occurred between families not individuals, meaning the relationship created by the marriage could even outlive the original couple (Matshalaga, 2004). In post-colonial times, there are no structures that have been put in place to replace such practices, so as to ensure that children from broken homes or those who have lost a parent do not fall through the cracks. This of course has serious implications for child care and child protection. Additionally, individuality and changing roles have even created fertile ground for some women to neglect their responsibility towards their children, sometimes even leaving them in the care of others completely, and simply to pursue their own desires (Unterhalter, 1961). This all leaves children from broken homes floating around in the extended family network even though one or both parents may still be alive. In such a space, there is room for children to venture out in the search of love and a new family. For child brides like Lisa, this is exactly what drove them to marriage.

In the case of orphaned children in post-colonial Zimbabwe, when a husband dies it is now difficult to absorb the wife and children as different branches of the lineage have been living apart as separate nuclear units, making the wife and maybe the children virtually strangers to other members of the lineage (Bourdillon, 1993; Foster *et al*, 1997; Mushunje, 2014). Paternal relatives in many cases simply refuse responsibility for orphans especially seeing as the practice

of wife inheritance no longer exists. Women are therefore often left as single mothers and, for those who then seek to remarry, they may be unable to take their children into their next marriage as discussed above. Given that women can also find themselves as single mothers due to unplanned pregnancies, the issue of youth sexuality in present-day Zimbabwe is also of great importance when addressing the issue of child protection for the upcoming generations.

Along with colonialism came, as noted, industrialisation and urbanisation that saw young people experiencing a new economic and legal freedom that did not exist in traditional agricultural settings. This along with other factors addressed below led to a change in behaviours (Bourdillon, 1993). As Christian beliefs infiltrated the lives of the Shona, sex and pregnancy outside of marriage became highly stigmatised. As years passed, Christian beliefs became conflated with the notion of *hunhu*, leading to a distorted version of *hunhu*. This version for instance not only implied that a young person possessing *hunhu* does not have pre-marital sex, but also does not talk about it or entertain the idea of it. In this respect, I would argue that one of the key challenges in ending child marriage are the high rates of sexual activity amongst young people and the cultural beliefs that presently stigmatise pregnancy outside the bounds of marriage.

Children conceived out of wedlock became branded negatively alongside their mothers. This is in fact one of the reasons why children in some cases end up living with extended families; as their mothers attempt to start a new life which cannot necessarily accommodate their past in the form of an illegitimate child. The extended families (both the mother's and the father's) who are then sometimes expected to absorb the child, sometimes resist this responsibility thus leaving children in situations where they are not viewed as belonging to either family (Foster *et al.*, 1997). This unfortunate reality has led to the situation we have now of young girls rushing into marriage or taking other drastic measures to cover their wrongdoing. In doing so, they attempt to save not only themselves and their families from ridicule but their future children as well from an unstable life that these child brides themselves may very well have faced growing up. Some also enter into marriage because they know that the failure to do so could lead to them being unable to find a man to take them seriously; with the worse possibility being finding someone who refuses to take in the child and thus resulting in them having to leave their child in the care of relatives. The issue here is not only the possibility of separation but also that their child could

end up with an abusive relative. A combined total of ten of the child brides studied in this thesis entered into marriages as a form of ‘damage control’. Four of these made the decision despite their families being against it and, in the other six cases, the families were behind the marriages after finding out about the pregnancy.

At the same time as the silence around sexuality was developing, young people’s sexuality was being disentangled from lineage and family control. Sexuality moved from being thought about in terms of lineage identity and obligation, to being viewed in the moral realm and private sphere where the concept of personal morality, individual sin, and personal right and wrong were at the forefront (Jeater, 1993). This movement towards maintaining social order through self-policing had serious implications for sexual behaviour as the individual’s conscience (and not the fear of breaking lineage obligations or being found out) began to control sexual behaviour (Jeater, 1993). Thus began young people’s exploration of their sexuality in silence. Both this silence and the freedom of sexual expression remain today, creating a new host of problems through the increase in unplanned pregnancies.

To illustrate the problems being driven by the current attitude towards sex, I turn to the 2001-2002 Young Adult Reproductive Health and HIV Survey in Zimbabwe which showed that, in the 15- to- 29-year-old age group, 72% of women and 99% of men lost their virginity before they were married. At the same time, only 15% of the women and 38% of the men used condoms during these encounters despite being knowledgeable about HIV (Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council, National AIDS Council & U.S Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002). My 2014 study on youth sexuality also provides useful information as it found that young people sometimes do not use contraception because being prepared for sex could give the impression that one is of loose morals. Young women therefore sometimes avoid buying or carrying condoms for this reason. Another issue is that young people often have limited or no access to sexual and reproductive health services because of society’s reluctance to truly accept that the younger population is sexually active (Madzivire, 2015). These issues also came up in my discussions with the community workers who noted that girls are resistant to the use of family planning because of the connotations attached to it:

“There’s a mother who was talking to her daughter about it and the girl responded ‘I don’t want to hear about that, you are now teaching me the ways of a prostitute’.” - Group 2, Female Community Worker 3 (27.08.17).

“Boys can go and get condoms but for girls it doesn’t really happen and yet our kids are out there having a lot of sex. Even the ones with kids already don’t want to admit that they have sex; like my daughter, she already has two children. She had the first when she was in Form Two and I suggested that she get a contraceptive injection but that led to a lot of back talking from her saying she wasn’t sleeping around. She then fell pregnant again in Form Three and she almost committed suicide because of this.” – Group 1, Female Community Worker 1 (22.08.17).

In concluding this section on post-colonial social organisation amongst the Shona, and how it relates to family structure and child marriage, it is clear that the changes that came about as a result of colonialism have had a widespread impact on the Shona way of life, impacting the family in particular. Changes in family life are not only linked to changes in value systems and the disintegration of *hunhu*, but to the outsourcing of functions that used to be carried out by the family. This outsourcing is both a driver and a consequence of the above-mentioned changes, which have resulted in the emergence of young people who are at risk of child marriage for various reasons. These reasons include having nowhere to turn for adequate care when parents die, neglect by parents who remarry, an increase in sexual freedom and risks of teenage pregnancy. The Zimbabwean state seems to have recognised the need for state-run child protective services to step in and support the stretched extended family structures, which has seen an increase in the number of orphanages and various child protection laws in Zimbabwe. Despite this increase, the state remains unable to cater for the high numbers of orphaned and neglected children which not only impacts those who are at risk of child marriage but those who have also been removed from those marriages and need a safe space. These issues are further discussed in the following section.

7.5 State response to family transitions

The indigenous family and marriage structures were radically transformed through the advent of colonialism, wage-labour, Christianity, education, urbanisation and migration. This

transformation contributed to the weakening of the extended family's ability to provide child protection services. The HIV and AIDS crisis challenged the extended family even further, as the death of many young people from HIV and AIDS left the extended family network even weaker. It also left thousands of orphans in its wake, thus creating strain on the extended family which had already been severely damaged by the trends towards the nuclear family and related changes (Foster *et al*, 1997; Matshalaga, 2004). As this traditional kinship system was no longer able to cope with the burden of orphans, the state stepped in with the intention of supporting the system in its care of children. This outsourcing led to the state becoming considered the custodian of children, with children coming under the care of the Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. In 1999, the government developed a National Orphan Care policy which focuses on mobilising resources to ensure orphans are at least provided with basic services (Matshalaga, 2004). This plan split the care for orphans along three lines, namely, the extended family network, community based care and institutional care.

Community based care in Zimbabwe “is organised on the basis of a village and its relationship to the administrative structures of the district and the province” which are kraals or villages of 20 to 30 households headed by a kraal head (*sabhuku*) (Matshalaga, 2004: 13). Under the community based orphan care system, households receive assistance from various community members such as maintenance of the home, money to meet basic needs and household goods (Matshalaga, 2004). This is often co-ordinated by various key players such as “kraal heads, village community workers, ward community workers, councillors, NGOs, churches and community-based organisations and volunteers” (Matshalaga, 2004: 13). Where villagers start projects, they can mobilise local resources from the community or any other sources, or they can pool resources to grow crops collectively in community fields which have been specifically set aside for orphan care. This is most common in rural areas and it is “a revival of an old tradition among the Shona where the chiefs allocated land for the use of the community to grow crops, the harvest of which was used to feed the indigent members of the community” (Matshalaga, 2004: 14). Income-generating projects are also set up at times; however; these can only support a limited number of orphans and often receive no external funding.

Institutional care occurs where children are placed in an orphanage or homes. Though these institutions could potentially “offer high quality care in terms of material needs such as food,

clothing and other services”, institutional care in Zimbabwe is not considered the best option given the high number of orphans (Matshalaga, 2004: 17; Gomba 2018). Institutional care has also been shown to have adverse effects on emotional well-being as it is quite lacking in psycho-social support (Matshalaga, 2004; Gomba, 2018).

While the state has attempted to intervene, the child protection system is overburdened and the shortage of resources, both human and material, often leads to many children falling through the gaps, thus putting them at risk of child marriage (Mushunje, 2014; Gomba, 2018). Those who are removed from marriages, for reasons noted earlier, are often left as well with nowhere to go because of the shortfall of state resources. There is a need to review the ways in which the state cares for children and to address some of the challenges faced. As noted by interviewed representatives from the Zimbabwe Republic Police, ChildLine Zimbabwe, the Department of Social Welfare and Musasa Project as partners in rolling out child protection services, the following issues could be a good place to start:

- The alignment of all laws concerning children. The age of consent in Zimbabwe is still 16 which makes it difficult to prosecute cases of child marriage as these cases are founded on sexual involvement with a minor.
- Thorough training of police officers, as some officers do not take cases of child marriage seriously and they tell those filing reports to deal with the matter privately.
- Increase in resources directed towards child protection so that girls can be removed from harmful environments quickly and be guaranteed a place of safety. These resources should also include children who have children of their own as places of safety are often reluctant to take a girl who has her own child(ren).
- Changes in the birth registration laws as lack of birth certificates presents a barrier to girls’ education.

Over the years, the government has also tried to address the country’s problems in various ways such as pushing for the reconstruction of *hunhu* within many spheres. But this has been done without necessarily delving into issues around the type of society that allowed *hunhu* to survive and thrive in its original form. In this regard, Mungwini (2011: 786), with whom I am inclined to agree, argues that solutions to the social troubles in Zimbabwe cannot be found in an “agenda of revitalising an indigenous traditional value system to deal with problems arising within this

increasingly plural world”. Whilst there may possibly be a need for some form of social consciousness to drive change from the inside, given the Zimbabwean people’s inclination to live out life based on some version of spirituality, this would not necessarily be the revitalisation of *hunhu* in its original form as it was motivated by fear (which was tied to traditional African religion and kinship networks). The creation of a form of hybrid version that is not anchored within traditional religion and is rooted in the ideas of family, love and altruism may therefore be a better alternative (van der Walt, 2010).

While Mungwini (2011) ultimately claims that a long-term answer dwells within a sustained democratic culture, I argue that the potential of families to play a role in maintaining a smooth running society and to address many of the existing social ills should not be underestimated. As such, I believe that addressing the challenges currently being faced by family structures and providing some sort of support system are crucial parts of the process of change that is ever so necessary in Zimbabwe. Perhaps these solutions may be based in new, evolving theological interventions as some work has already started being done around this (Ssemogerere, 2011; Dreyer, 2004; Magezi, 2018). In their own different ways, these three cited scholars argue for the use of a combined approach of pastoral care, practical theology and public theory in addressing social issues and bringing about change.

Pastoral care often refers to services provided by a pastor/religious leader; practical theology is a branch of theology that ensures theology is relevant and applicable to everyday issues without necessarily targeting a non-Christian audience; and public theology focuses on the interaction between theology and public issues faced within contemporary society at large (Dreyer, 2004; Magezi, 2018). Ssemogerere (2011: 2) claims the existence of a significant convergence of “underlying African and Christian values, governing marriage and family” which can be analysed and harnessed as a point of departure to bring about change. Ssemogerere’s approach allows for a streamlining of beliefs, bringing together aspects of the ‘old’ traditional spirituality and the ‘new’ Christian spirituality to bring about meaningful and lasting change. Dreyer (2004) and Magezi (2018) are more explicit in their support for multi-sectoral approaches to social issues, having published research where theological interventions are inclusive of both Christian and non-Christian audiences. Using all three approaches to deal with challenges in family life would therefore entail:

1. Interventions that start off change from within the church by practically addressing familial challenges faced by church members.
2. Interventions that start off with finding and analysing points of convergence with traditional (spiritual) African beliefs that played positive roles in social organisation.
3. Interventions focusing on the greater secular world, assisting individuals and families to successfully deal with family transitions regardless of their religious affiliation or beliefs.

Given the broad reach of this three-fold strategy and the fact that Zimbabweans are for the most part a spiritual people, with the Intercensal Demographic Survey showing that 84% of Zimbabweans are self-proclaimed Christians, I believe this is a strategy that would be worth exploring further.

7.6 Conclusion

While talk of family transitions often speaks of the extended family and the nuclear family as the two major ways in which the family is organised, a literature review on family transitions in Zimbabwe by Chirozva, Mubaya and Mukamuri (2007) and research by Magezi (2018) claim that a third form exists, one in which individuals are caught in a liminal space between the two forms of organisation. Indeed I believe that the family unit's failure to handle transitions well, along with the transitional challenges faced by families, are reflected through the cases of child marriages. Though I do not want to simply romanticise traditional social organisation amongst the Shona, as this was not without its problems, various safety nets existed in traditional Shona society which made marriages more stable and also catered for children born out of wedlock as well as orphans. As time has gone by, changes in family structures have led to the extended family weakening and subsequently failing to carry out this function in the same way that it used to. This is not to say that the extended family has completely broken down and been replaced by nuclear families, as in some cases new forms of family have emerged which are caught in-between the two. Even though they are different in their structures, all three family forms have failed to adequately support vulnerable children and change is necessary to create family systems in which children are valued and catered for. As ideas are developed around how to potentially deal with the problems around child protection, the challenge to review policies, and to restructure and realign attitudes towards social problems and the resulting responses, cannot be

left to the state alone. It is also necessary to explore ways in which the family unit can be better placed to contribute towards addressing the problem of children at risk of child marriage.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

When I started this study, my intention was to explore and understand the experiences of child marriage and how they affect those who have lived through them. As I engaged with the narratives, I became more and more consumed by the bigger picture behind these experiences. I found myself wanting to know how child marriage relates to marriage in general, an exploration which led to me delving into the relationship between child marriage and the changing family structures in present-day Zimbabwe. As my evidence pulled my attention further upstream I eventually landed on the real question I should, or at least could, have been focusing on in the first place, that of how child marriage fits in with modern day marriage practices. I then made this question the focal point of my research. In a bid to “explore and understand child marriage as a part of modern day marriage practices in Zimbabwe”, I made use of a secondary objective which was “to explore and understand the lived experience of child marriage by drawing on stories told by women who were married before their 18th birthday”. This objective was in turn addressed through a set of tertiary objectives, namely, to “analyse the causes, conditions and consequences of child marriage; to document issues around identity (re)formation; and to understand family and community attitudes and perceptions of child marriage”.

It is through focusing on the tertiary and secondary objective that my main research objective was unexpectedly addressed in two parts during the course of this study: the first relates to how the marriages of these child brides themselves fit in with the general marriage and family patterns in their current society and the second relates to how child marriage fits in with the marriage and family patterns taken up by the parents of child brides.

Starting with the first part, I put forward the claim that the current types of marriage (*kutizisa*, *kutizira*, *mapoto*) in which children find themselves are a reflection of the un-planned character of the marriages, the changing economic conditions, and the changes that have occurred in how young people understand and play out their sexuality. These three factors sit within a broader discussion of family life which I address in this closing chapter.

With regards to the second part, people's experiences of their childhood largely affect what it means to be a child to them, what their childhood looks like and ultimately how they go about living their lives right up until they reach adulthood. With this in mind, we cannot ignore the impact of family transitions on the formation of marriages in previous generations, that is, the very generation of parents that have given birth to children who find themselves married before their 18th birthday. In looking at child brides' relationships with their families, I argue that child marriage is in many ways related to family structure and family transitions, which cannot be extracted from larger socio-economic change.

In this chapter I begin by summarising the tertiary and secondary objectives before delving into the implications as far as child marriage and modern day marriage practices are concerned. These explorations of the implications of family transitions on child marriage include a specific hypothesis that is put forward for further consideration at the end of each discussion in Section 8.3. These hypotheses are based on my findings and can be taken as points to explore further in future research. I close off the chapter by recommending a way in which interventions from the field of theology could possibly lead to stronger families which are better able to take on the role of child protection.

8.2 Secondary and tertiary objectives

In seeking to explore and understand the lived experiences of girls married before their 18th birthday, I explored and documented the drivers, conditions and consequences of child marriage and the issues around childhood and identity formation. I also sought to understand family and community attitudes and perceptions of child marriage. The family attitudes were attained through child bride narrations of how their families responded to their marriage or the roles played by the families in the marriage process. Community attitudes were drawn not only from child bride narrations but from the interviews and focus group discussions with community workers and representatives from the ZRP, the Department of Social Welfare, ChildLine Zimbabwe and the Musasa Project.

Contrary to the human rights literature which automatically equates child marriage with forced marriage due to the belief that children cannot consent to marriage, my research shows that whilst some child brides may indeed be forced into marriage, in many cases these children

themselves make use of various degrees of agency to enter into marriage as a way of meeting self-regarding or other-regarding preferences. The figures below (Figure 4 and Figure 5) clearly show the drivers of child marriage and the girls who fell into these categories.

Figure 4: Self-regarding Drivers of Child Marriage

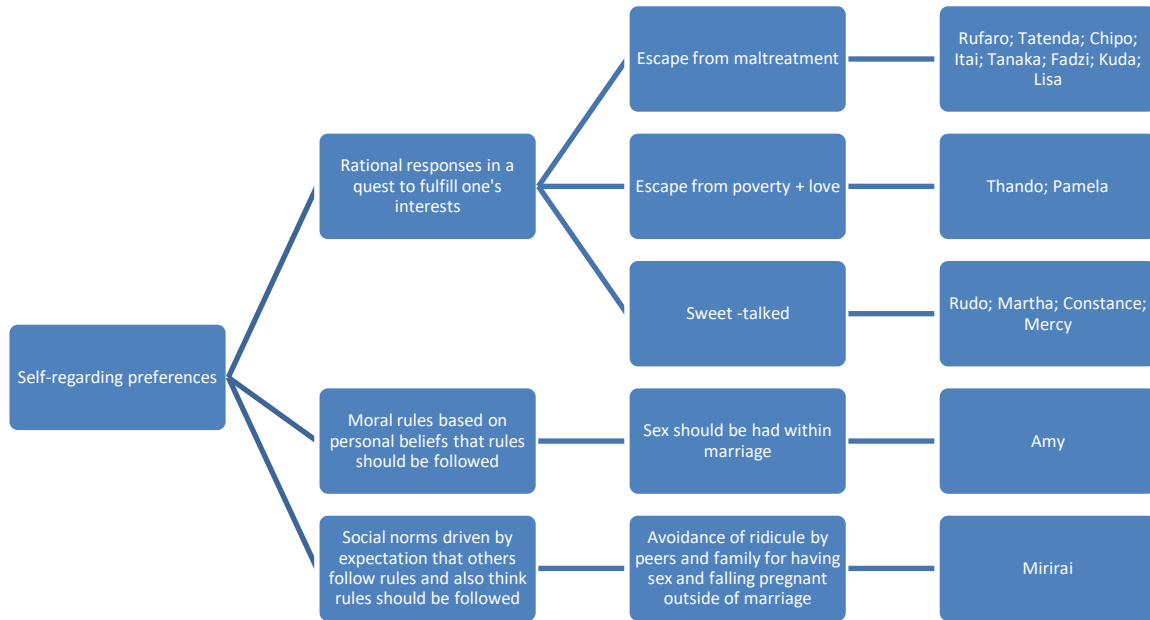
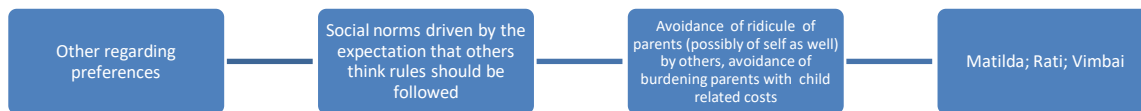


Figure 5: Other-regarding Drivers of Child Marriage



Although six participants were forced into marriage, three for being pregnant (Sally, Mavis, Violet) and three for being at a boy's house (Cleo, Sandra, Sophia), the remaining 19 were split between other-regarding or self-regarding decisions to enter into marriage, with some possibly having been driven by both. At least 16 participants were thinking of themselves when they decided to get married, while Matilda, Rati and Vimbai seemed more concerned with their

family's reputation although it is possible that they were also concerned about their own too and their children's futures. It is indeed possible to doubt that this necessarily means the girls consented to marriage, but the fact is that six of them actually made a unilateral decision to elope (*kutizira*/flight elopement) and followed through with their plan whilst 13 of them discussed this with their boyfriends beforehand (one *kukumbira*/marriage by request; ten *kutizisa*/elopement marriage; two *mapoto*/co-habitation). Though these marriages may have taken place after child brides considered the options available to them, it does not necessarily mean that these marriages (to the specific men whom they married) were planned over long periods of time. It is for this reason that I refer to these marriages as un-planned except in Mercy's case where her husband went through the ideal *kukumbira* channel where he asked for Mercy's hand in marriage from her parents and paid the bride wealth before they began living together – thus making their union a traditional one. Others sat on a continuum between traditional unions where bride wealth is paid and modern unions where no bride wealth is paid.

The type of marriage that one entered into and the events leading up to the marriage did not necessarily reflect the conditions within the marriage as experiences were diverse and also tied into experiences of childhood and transitions into marriage and various marital roles. Experiences of marriage were classified as positive, mixed or negative by the child brides. These findings showed that, even in cases where girls make unilateral decisions to elope (*kutizira*/flight elopement), marriages can turn out well; and where girls are convinced to elope by their boyfriends (*kutizisa*/elopement marriage), marriages can turn out to be bad. All in all, consequences of marriage were diverse, ranging from issues of abuse, family interference, infidelity and run away husbands to positive ones where child brides who may not have grown up in loving homes or good conditions found love and family belonging along with provisions for their needs.

When marriages failed, such as in the cases of Vimbai, Pamela and Matilda who made decisions to marry even with their families being against it, they were reabsorbed into their families even where they now had children of their own. Mirirai's parents, who had been in support of the marriage initially because she was pregnant and the man was willing to take responsibility, also had no problem taking her back after the marriage ended as they were concerned about her wellbeing. The ways in which these families had responded to the girls falling pregnant and the

thought of marriage reflected their beliefs around premarital sex and pregnancy outside of wedlock. The families who had resisted marriage felt that a baby was no reason for a marriage to be established, while those who pushed for marriage supported the chastity norm and saw marriage as a solution— however, this was only if the couple could actually hold a good relationship as a married couple.

Family perceptions were also visible in the way some parents actively tried to get their children out of marriages even though they may have driven their children away in anger or fear because of the girls potentially being sexual active. This occurred in the cases of Sandra and Sophia whose guardians regretted having sent them away for not sleeping at home. All in all, eight of the child brides faced resistance from their parents with regards to them marrying at a young age and four received support simply because they insisted and would not change their minds. The rest of the participants (who had fled from abusive living situations) had guardians who seemed indifferent to their decision to marry as they did not follow up to check up on the girls. It is quite likely that these guardians were in fact somewhat relieved to no longer have to care for them given that they had shown a blatant disregard for these children when they were in their care.

Community members generally agreed that parents were no longer forcing marriages as much as they did before communities became sensitised about the effects of child marriage as well as the legal ramifications. While the older generations are beginning to shift away from looking at child marriage as acceptable or as a solution to adolescent pregnancy, young people themselves remain at risk because of various structural defects of the modern family and also longstanding beliefs around youth sexuality and child bearing. Along with needing to be protected from toxic living environments, young people then are also in need of the same ‘rewiring’ that has been occurring amongst adults.

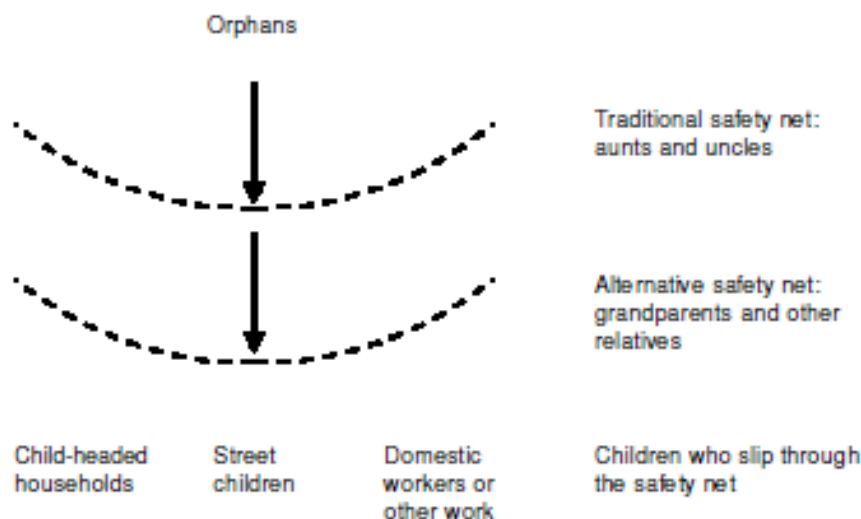
8.3 Family transitions and child marriage

The drivers of child marriage point towards various transitions that have occurred within the family structure, putting children in more vulnerable conditions as compared to the past. These transitions have three visible effects and the following sections summarise these effects as well as put across three hypotheses for consideration in programmes focusing on ending child marriages.

8.3.1 Weakening of the extended family

Modern conditions make it impossible for traditional social organisation and family functions to continue to exist as they did in the past. Rights and obligations conferred by marriage no longer influence the stability of the marriage or the position of the children within marriages. The current family structures are caught in-between the pre-colonial and the post-colonial realities, with functions which are expected of the present-day nuclear family often being incompatible with the socio-economic environment we find ourselves in. This is often viewed by the layman as evidence of today's Shona people, particularly the young people, having been "brainwashed" by the West, leading to them abandoning their identity which is embedded in *hunhu*. I in turn argue that these changes were inevitable with the coming of urbanisation and are not a direct reflection of individual moral decay. Families are simply no longer built in such a way that orphaned or deserted children can easily find a home, not just any home but a home where they are truly integrated into the family and can live a life free of abuse and the threat of imminent danger from caregivers. In line with this, I extend Foster's (2000) original model of the extended family safety net for orphans in Africa (Figure 6) to include other vulnerable children. I also add child marriage as an outcome of the failure of these nets which now includes state care as well, as I show below (Figure 7).

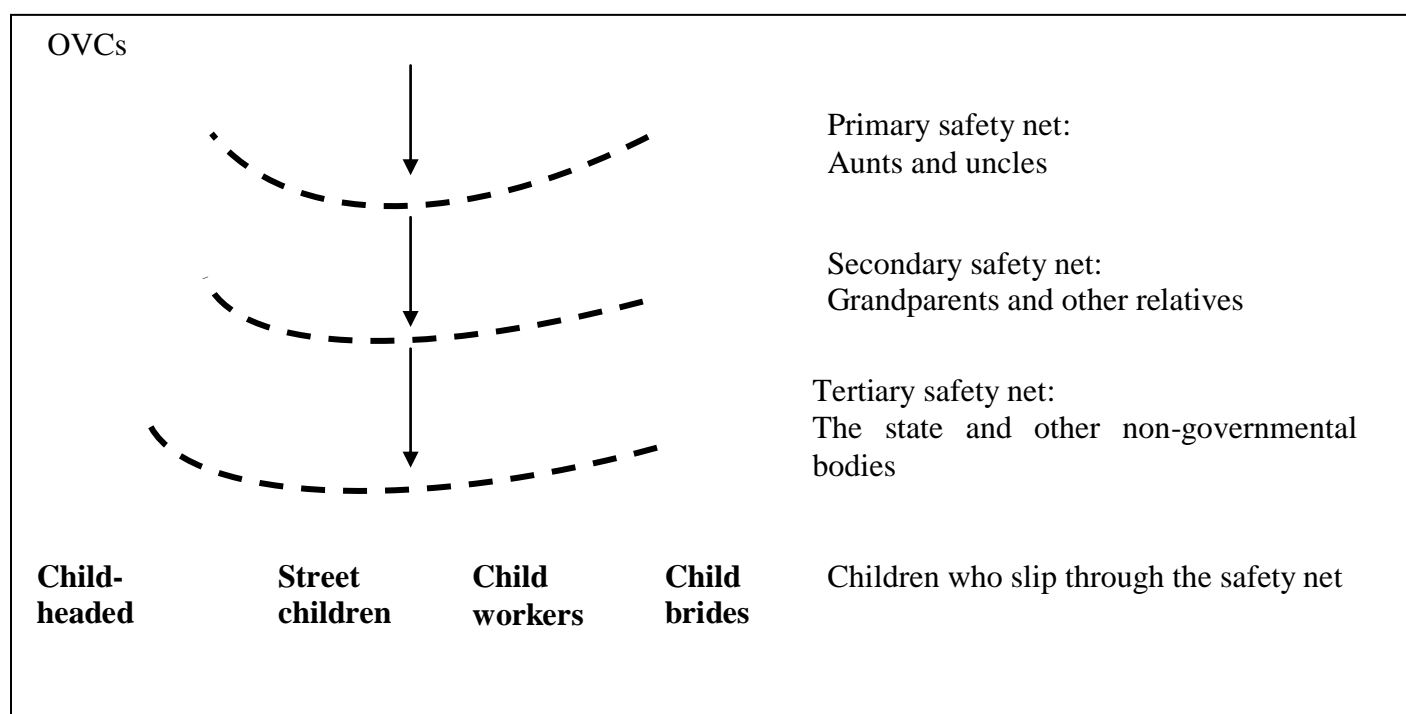
Figure 6: Model of the Extended Family Safety Net for Orphans in Africa



Source: Foster (2000: 57).

Where abuse exists, children may end up not only falling through these safety nets but, rather, jumping from them as they are left with the choice of either staying in that environment or entering into marriage in search of a better life. Until the day comes where orphans and vulnerable children can feel safe and loved without having to look outside their homes for this, child marriage will continue to exist. The first hypothesis therefore presented based on my findings is that the conditions underpinning child marriage are linked to the changing family structure and its inadequacy when it comes to absorbing children.

Figure 7: Model of the Safety Nets for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Zimbabwe



8.3.2 The death of cooperation

The death of economic coordination on a community level works hand in hand with the weakened kinship network in perpetuating a situation in which large numbers of vulnerable children fall through the cracks of the various child protection systems. While the rise of individualism was an inevitable result of capitalism and individual wage labour, it is the economic inequalities and cases of extreme poverty as derived from an unstable economy that I view as creating conditions of child neglect and mistreatment. It is impossible for one to offer to look after a child or for one to take good care of children in their care when the resources

themselves are barely available. Until we find ways to fund the effective care of vulnerable children, adding to the options they have in terms of safe spaces, child marriage will continue to exist. This brings us to the second hypothesis, which states that individualism eroded cooperative economic and subsistence structures which facilitated the community's care of children in need of assistance.

8.3.3 The corruption of sexual identity

The idea of *hunhu* that Zimbabweans love to parade, especially around the issue of sexual control, is in fact an ideal that was corrupted when it was integrated with Victorian views around sexuality. The silence around sex has done nothing but feed irresponsible sexual behaviour amongst young people, the consequences of which in some cases could lead to unplanned 'corrective' marriages – marriages that gloss over a person's moral shortcomings as society has become unforgiving of those who fail to tow the line of these apparently traditional beliefs and practices around sexuality. Can we instead not pull out positive lessons from how the pre-colonial Shona girls were raised? Can we too not be as welcoming of life as our predecessors were even when it was unplanned, unexpected and outside the boundaries of the set norms? For many years, girls have had to choose between shame and unplanned marriages, with the latter seemingly being a strong preference. Until young girls are no longer shamed, mocked or rejected for falling pregnant outside of the boundaries of marriage, child marriage will continue to exist. Following from this, the third and final hypothesis states that the replacement of lineage control over a 'corporate' sexuality with a distorted version of the concept of *hunhu* creates fertile ground for 'corrective' marriages.

8.4 Where to from here?

Part of the solution to addressing child marriage then comes down to addressing tensions that affect the effectiveness of the safety net within the modern Shona family and finding ways of decreasing children's vulnerabilities to unplanned pregnancies and child marriage. I argue for an approach that draws on both traditional and religious principles in the form of *hunhu* and Christian principles.

In attempting to address the tensions faced by families, Magezi (2018:7) suggested a move towards “a public pastoral responsive ministry to changing family situations”. By this he meant that innovative interventions need to be constructed through pastoral care to reach out not only to individuals within the church but those outside this body as well. These interventions are both spiritual and public in nature, springing from the platform of public practical theology which generally aims to “include the public as one of the audiences of practical theology, include everyday concerns and issues in its reflection [and] facilitate a dialogue between theology and contemporary culture” (Dreyer, 2004: 920). In their public expression, interventions would for example include assisting people by linking them to relevant services, assisting them to deal with individual and family tensions and providing people with a spiritual family and community to support them and alleviate loneliness (Magezi, 2018). These interventions are not “about turning a church into a non-governmental organisation but developing sacrificial and sensitive ministries that address the needs of people” (Magezi, 2018: 7).

Magezi’s proposed strategy includes interventions on three different levels which he considered critical stages of the transition from the extended family structure to the nuclear family. He breaks these down as (i)the period just before an individual leaves his extended family and migrates to an urban area; (ii) the period just after an individual arrives and begins to settle in an urban area; and(iii) the period during which one has become fully incorporated into their new living environment. Three tasks are thus associated with the interventions and these are “preventative, mitigatory and maintenance pastoral care” (2018: 7)

Preventative pastoral care is focused on individuals planning on rural to urban migration, as well as the family members they leave behind. The purpose of this care is on “preparation, conscientisation, anticipation and shaping expectations” from both parties (Magezi, 2018: 7). This includes preventative counselling to manage expectations and foster realism while also carrying out a process of awareness raising so all parties concerned are familiar with the risks and challenges that may be encountered. Teachings can include practical advice and wisdom, as well as spiritual preparation. This intervention can be run as a part of school guidance and counselling process or as a programme for the parents and youths at church. Mitigatory pastoral care focuses on “responding to emerging needs” (Magezi, 2018: 7). This is targeted at those who have just arrived in their environments and are in need of practical support such as being linked

to different service providers for various needs from spiritual to physical needs or simply giving them emotional support. Lastly, maintenance pastoral care focuses on “developing congregational ministries that provide ongoing safety nets”, forming the church in such a way that it plays the role of a second home for the people where their spiritual and physical needs can be addressed (Magezi, 2018: 7). This includes “establishing accommodating ministries of sustaining and nurturing” which can be quite useful for families feeling overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them (Magezi, 2018: 7).

Looking at the other concerns of youth sexuality and the state of marriages that break down, leaving children vulnerable to child marriage as an option, I suggest the use of public religious education to re-establish values around marriage and sexuality. Taking a religious angle can be useful in this case as ‘human nature’, particularly for Zimbabweans, includes a spiritual aspect which cannot be divorced from everyday life. I place emphasis more on a public-friendly approach when addressing youth concerns, instead of a clean-cut religious approach because – amongst young people in Zimbabwe – one can easily witness how the Christian faith is slowly becoming marginalised. This marginalisation is occurring as Christianity gives way to secularisation, leaving an environment where “the values advocated by the institutionalised church are no longer accepted by young people as unquestionably relevant to their lives” and where issues of morality are largely driven by self-interest and not cultural or religious norms (Dreyer, 2004: 922).

Although young people may distance themselves from religious institutions such as churches, in their own way, they still search for stability in an uncertain world through various institutions and behaviours that seek to connect them to something larger than themselves. This seeking of more from life often rests on the notion of spirituality, with the argument that one does not have to be religious in the traditional sense to be spiritual, i.e. to have a personal relationship with a higher power or to behave in certain positive ways. Based on Ssemogerere’s (2011) insights, it is this spirituality that could possibly be tapped into to bring about change to address child marriage. The task would once again entail sensitivity to multiple levels, as in Magezi’s approach. I suggest, firstly, a preventative approach that speaks to re-establishing values around sexual intercourse, marriage and family for young people and working with them and their parents to encourage open communication channels around these issues. Secondly, there could

be a mitigatory approach where services such as counselling and advice are provided to girls who have fallen pregnant outside of wedlock; and counselling for their parents as well to decide on a way to handle the situation and move forward without having to end up with the child married. In the third instance, maintenance care could arise in cases where the child is already married and needs support within that marriage, be it to make the marriage last as they so desire or to escape from an abusive situation.

All these approaches can pull in Christian principles as well as traditional African principles from the concept of *hunhu*. Seeing as *hunhu* had its underpinnings in spiritual beliefs, I do believe it is not a big stretch to foster a new version of *hunhu* which is more suitable to the current Christian context. This would be a version which is rooted not in fear of ancestors or of group criticism by community members as with the African traditional religion, but in Christian principles of love and altruism which would complement the side of *hunhu* which speaks of tolerance and the love of family and community. This approach would be designed to “enhance the spiritual dimension” of those in need of services, hopefully fostering an awakening of a Jesus narrative while they exist in their various ways of life (Dreyer, 2004). This will hopefully move young people away from the unplanned pregnancies that possibly arise through the privatisation of religion, in which individuals are driven by their own convictions and self-interest as they approach issues around sexuality/sexual expression, and not through the social consciousness underlying creedal descriptions of Christianity. This does not then mean the narrative of Christianity must overshadow individual narratives or that “theology takes precedence over the insights of the social science”, but that complementary interventions would be run with both the social context and “the foundational narrative of Christianity” in mind (Dreyer, 2004: 939). On this basis, all social realities, including religion, can be truly understood by considering their “dialectical relationship with society” (Dreyer, 2004: 928).

8.5 Conclusion

The attempt to simultaneously maintain traditional family links and functions, a moral high ground around youth sexuality and a sense of individualism has to date failed in terms of creating a lively, warm society. We have seen that moral education on its own is insufficient in bringing about change and so needs to be pinned to religiosity in some way. Instead of being caught in the

past, thinking in terms of what we grew up being taught about how society “should be” run, let us take into mind the reality in which we live in and take steps towards drawing up new and relevant solutions that fit the environment we live in; and maybe, just maybe, we can see child marriage come to an end.. As stated by Biccheri, Jiang and Lindemans (2014), ending child marriage will take a change in beliefs, options or preferences. Here I have presented areas of change particularly in the options that young people are given and the beliefs they have - which ultimately also influence their preferences. Seeing as social science approaches to addressing reality have so far been unable to address child marriage in its entirety, maybe it is time we try including a theological approach in the reconstruction of reality. As I close this thesis, the task I call for is preparing people, regardless of their age, to be committed to a common good on the grounds of their Christian values and faith.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CHILD BRIDES

The questions will seek to uncover the participants' understandings and experiences of child marriage. The questions cover four stages.

The period prior to the marriage

1. When and where were you born?
2. Do you have a birth certificate?
3. Where did you grow up and who did you grow up with? Growing up which type of duties were you expected to perform in the home?
4. Did you attend school? If yes what is your highest level of education? When did the idea first come up for you to be married?
5. Were any of your friends or peers married at the time?
6. Before you were married, was there anything that you thought affected your life in an important way? (*When did this happen? What happened? What else was happening at that time? Was this a common occurrence in the community?*).
7. How was your life before you got married? (*Very good, Good, Not very good, Very bad*)
8. How would you describe your economic status before you got married? (*Very rich, Rich, Comfortable, Poor, Very poor.*)

The point at which they entered into marriage

1. At what age did you get married?
2. Where you attending school at the time?
3. Would you say you got married at the right time?
4. Whose decision was it?
5. Did you agree to be married?
6. How did it happen? (where, who)
7. Is the marriage registered?
8. Was your birth certificate presented?
9. Where did you live when you first got married?
10. How did your family react to the marriage?

11. How did the community react to the marriage?
12. How did friends react to the marriage?

The period immediately after they got married

1. How did you find your marriage just after you got married?
2. What type of duties were you expected to perform in the home?
3. Did you continue going to school?
4. Did you keep your friends?
5. Did your life change compared to before you were married?
6. Were you happy?
7. How was your life right after you got married? (*Very good, Good, Not very good, Very bad*).
8. How would you describe your economic status right after you got married? (*Very rich, Rich, Comfortable, Poor, Very poor*)
9. Did you have any children within the marriage?
10. How old were you when you had your first child?
11. How did you feel about having a child at this age/point?
12. Is there anything you would change about how it happened?
13. How did you find life as a mother and a wife?
14. How was your relationship with your in laws?

Their perception of their marriage now

1. Are you still married to the same husband?
2. What is your current living arrangement?
3. Would you encourage others to get married early? Why/Why not?
4. How were the first 3 years of your marriage? (*What happened? How did you feel about this? What else was happening at that time? Was this a common occurrence in the community?*)
5. Were there any positive highlights?
6. Were there any negative highlights?

7. Looking back now is there anything you wish you had done differently? (*before marriage, during marriage*).
8. Was your health affected in any way by your marriage?
9. Have you remarried since your separation?
10. Do you see yourself remarrying?
11. If you could share one important lesson from your life what would it be?
12. Were there any benefits to marrying early?
13. Were there any risks?
14. How did you manage the transition into marriage and motherhood?

Future

When you think of the future what comes to mind?

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

All in all, the FDGs will hopefully lead to answers to the following questions

Understandings of child marriage

1. What are the understandings that the community has of who is and who is not a child?
2. What are the markers/characteristics of adulthood?
3. What is marriage? Does the payment of *roora* mean one is married? Can you be considered married before *roora* has been paid?
4. What form of marriage is most common in your community? Why? (civil/customary)
5. Why do people in your community get married?
6. Why do young people (below 18) get married?
7. Is there a certain age below which marriage should not be permitted at all?
8. Are you aware of any laws which address child marriage?
9. When did you become aware of these laws?
10. Has this changed the way in which the community views marriage?

Attitudes towards child marriage

1. Is there an ideal age at which one should be married?
2. Who should decide when a person is ready to marry?
3. Should young people have a say in whether to get married or not?
4. Who should be responsible for choosing the spouse?
5. Can marrying early be a good thing?
6. Does marriage automatically make you an adult?
7. If one should fall pregnant should they automatically marry the father of their child?
8. How would you advise a young girl who was considering eloping after she fell pregnant?
9. Should a couple below the ages of 18 be allowed to make the decision to marry?
10. Who can be considered a child? Why?
11. Would you allow any of your children to marry before 18?
12. How do you feel about campaigns to end child marriage?
13. Should perpetrators of child marriage be arrested? (husband, father, mother?)

Perceptions of child marriage

1. Does age affect one's experience of marriage?

2. How common is child marriage in your community?
3. Is it possible to reduce child marriage?
4. Are there any risks associated with child marriage?
5. What type of future is open to those who are married as children?
6. Are there any benefits associated with (i) child marriage (ii) marrying later in life?
7. Are there any risks associated with: (i) child marriage (ii) marrying later in life?
8. Why do people below 18 (i) choose to get married (ii) choose not to get married.
9. How can people at risk of child marriage be supported?
10. What are the protective factors against child marriage? /How can child marriage be avoided?

Interventions

1. Are you aware of any organisations working on child marriage in this district?
2. Have you interacted with any of them?
3. Do you know anyone who has received help from them?
4. What would you say they are doing right?
5. What would you say they are doing wrong?
6. Are there any additional issues you would like them to address?

Social and cultural beliefs and behaviours

1. Are there any rites of passage children take part in?
2. Do these play a role in preparing them for marriage?
3. Are there some community members whose sons and daughters are not entering child marriages? If so, what is their rationale for not doing so?
4. How does the community respond to the decision not to marry as a child?
5. Do community members report cases of child marriage? What happens after this?

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR NGOS AND GOVERNMENT BODIES

Desktop research was carried out to examine the support provided by selected organisations in the area. Interviews with key organisational representatives followed and led to further desk research on identified interventions.

(Identify current and future interventions, where neither exist, the reason behind this lack of interventions will be examined).

1. According to you when does one become an adult? What characterises adulthood/most important marker of adulthood?
2. What is your understanding of child marriage as an organisation?
3. What is your stance on child marriage as an organisation? Do you have a theory of change looking specifically at child marriage? (A theory of change is the thinking behind how a particular intervention will bring about results. What interventions must be in place to lead to the long term outcome?)
4. What are the consequences of child marriage in the district?
5. Are there any benefits associated with child marriage in the district?
6. Is child marriage considered a serious problem within the district?
7. What are the causes of child marriage in the district?
8. How can these causes be addressed? Is this currently being done?
9. Are there any rites of passage that girls and boys undergo?
10. What motivates community members to try and stop child marriage?
11. What motivates community members to uphold child marriage?
12. What are the understandings that the community has of who is and who is not a child?
13. Who are the key players in addressing child marriage within the community?
14. What interventions do you have in place to fight against child marriage? Target groups- unmarried/married/separated?
15. Within your organisation is this funding directed towards child marriage only?
16. How did child marriage become one of the thematic areas focused on by your organisation?
17. How long have you been working on the issue of child marriage?

18. How was child marriage addressed in this community before you started on this area?
19. Are your interventions evidence based? (what works?)
20. Is the community aware of these interventions? Were they involved in drawing them up?
How have they reacted to them?
21. How did/do you raise awareness about your work?
22. How widespread are your interventions?
23. How many girls/young women have you reached over the past year?
24. Do the interventions align with the needs of at risk groups and married and separated individuals?
25. Do religious and traditional leaders have a key role to play when addressing within the district?
26. Could you put me in touch with or suggest ways for me to get in touch with former child brides and community (traditional and religious) leaders who may be interested in the study?
27. Where can I find written information on the work you have done in the past, currently and future plans?

APENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ZRP REPRESENTATIVE

Interviews will be held with police officers in the Victim Friendly Unit to gain an understanding of the reporting of cases of child marriage and how the police deals with issues of child marriage within the district.

1. What is the police force's understanding of child marriage?
2. What is the police force's stance on child marriage?
3. What are the consequences of child marriage in the district?
4. Are there any benefits associated with child marriage in the district?
5. Is child marriage considered a serious problem within the district?
6. Do you know the causes of child marriage in the district?
7. How can these causes be addressed? Is this currently being done?
8. Do you know who the key players in addressing child marriage are within the community?
9. Do you have any interventions in place to fight against child marriage? Target groups- unmarried/married/separated/parents of at risk youth?
10. Are your interventions evidence based? (what works?)
11. Is the community aware of these interventions? Were they involved in drawing them up? How have they reacted to them?
12. How did/do you raise awareness about your work?
13. How widespread are your interventions?
14. How many girls/young women have you reached over the past year?
15. Do the interventions align with the needs of at risk groups and married and separated individuals?
16. Do religious and traditional leaders have a key role to play when addressing within the district? Do you work with them to address child marriage?
17. Where can I find written information on the work you have done in the past, currently and future plans?
18. How often are cases of child marriage reported?
19. What procedures are in place as far as reporting is concerned?
20. How are alleged reports verified?

21. Who is held responsible when a case of child marriage is reported?
22. Can you share any official statistics around the number of reported cases with me?