

**Negotiated Feminism? A Study of Married Bemba
Women Appropriating the *Imbusa* Pre-Marital
'Curriculum' at Home and Workplace**

By

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December 2016**

DECLARATION

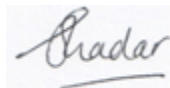
In agreement with the University principles, I hereby state explicitly that this work has not been submitted at any other University or any other institution of higher learning other than the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus), and that unless specifically indicated to the contrary within the text; it is my own original work.



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December 2016

As the candidate's supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission



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CERTIFICATION

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Re: Confirmation of Language Editing

To Whom It May Concern

This letter is to confirm that Mutale Kaunda's PhD thesis, **Negotiated Feminism? A Study of Married Bemba Women Appropriating the Imbusa Pre-Marital 'Curriculum' at Home and Workplace**, was edited by Karen Buckenham.

Cordially

Dr Karen Buckenham



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This is to confirm that this dissertation entitled:

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'Curriculum' at Home and Workplace

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DEDICATION

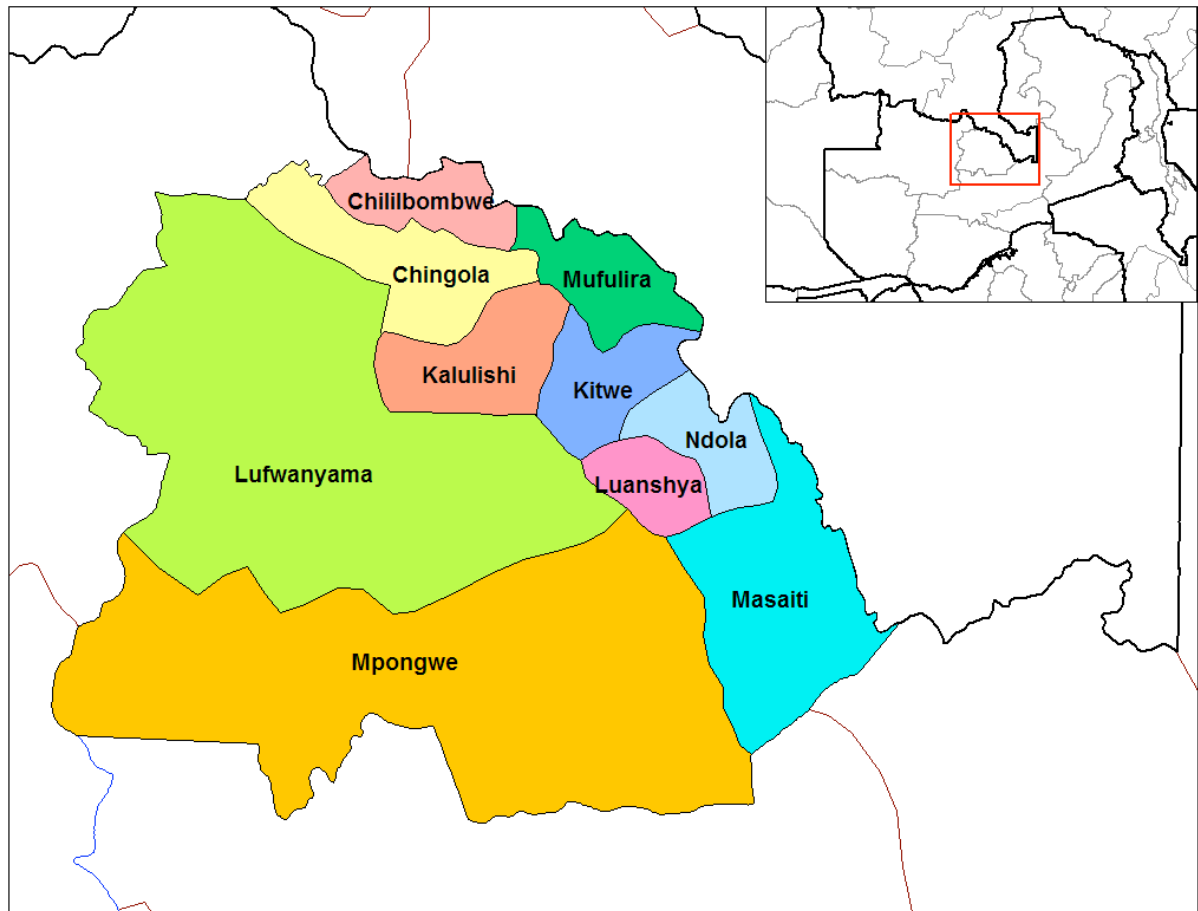
TO

My mother who fathered me!! Ms Louise Mambwe, thank you for your inspiration to soar, I always wondered how you managed to raise us up with a FIRM but loving hand as a single mother. I miss you dearly; RIP and I wish you were here to witness and celebrate this milestone I have achieved.

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To the participants in my study, and the many other African women who have freely shared their knowledge with researchers in the past, I hope that through this study and as a Bemba woman, I have mediated your voices as honorably and respectfully as possible. It is my hope that the experiences you have shared will continue to open up some kind of *imbusa* spaces for authentic reflection and debate, and not just become intellectual property of the academy.

MAP OF COPPERBELT PROVINCE, ZAMBIA



The map is extracted from www.Mapsof.net (2016).

ABSTRACT AND KEY TERMS

Abstract

Imbusa spaces (anthropologists refers to it as initiation rites) are often perceived as cultural spaces for uneducated, rural women, yet, even educated Bemba (Zambian) women undergo these rites as well. *Imbusa* teachings (consisting of sacred emblems/visual aids handed to brides) are important for the Bemba people and essential to the marriageability of a woman in almost similar ways that education qualifies one to be employable. This empirical study focused on Bemba married career women, living in the Copperbelt province of Zambia. The objectives of this study were first, to discuss the *imbusa* teachings regarding Bemba career women. Second, to determine how career married women learn, negotiate, and resist *amafunde yambusa* in their homes and at places of work. Third, I analyzed why Bemba married career women negotiate, engage or resist *amafunde yambusa* in their homes and at places of work in the way that they do. The study was framed through Nnaemeka's (2003) feminist postcolonial concept of Nego-feminism. Snowball sampling was used and seventeen Bemba married career women were interviewed using feminist interviewing to produce data concerning the indigenous *imbusa* teachings of the Bemba people in the Copperbelt province of Zambia. African cultural hermeneutics and community of practice theories were used as tools for analyzing the produced data. Findings established that Bemba women, like women from other ethnic groups within Zambia, have been progressing in careers and education, while they are given a teaching that has remained static in some of its content. At the same time, the teachings received at *imbusa* have been tainted with cultural aspects from various cultures that the Bemba people encountered upon migrating to the Copperbelt. I have demonstrated how women move and live between two parallel worlds – the public and private spheres – and hence have a conflictive consciousness with regard to their identity in the two worlds. This implies a need to a revisit the traditional syllabus or curriculum so that it is in line with current debates on women's issues. The study concludes with a proposal for a progressive curriculum for career women that is inclusive of teachings on gender justice, masculinities and femininities, and involves men as part of certain aspects of the teachings, since currently it is only women who are taught in *imbusa*.

Key Terms: Agency, *Amafunde yambusa*, Negotiation, Curriculum, Nego-Feminism, Identity

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING THE STUDY: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

Despite new types of initiation rites and wedding ceremonies, such as Christian weddings and kitchen parties, based on Christian ideas and ideas of modernity, traditional initiation rites remain the central institution that construe female Zambian identity – Thera Rasing (2001: 3).

1.0. Introduction and Background

I grew up on the Zambian Copperbelt province and was aware from a young age how important marriage is for a Bemba¹ woman. In Bemba thought system, just as some other African cultures, marriage is sacred, and women look forward to being prepared for this sacred venture. The *Imbusa*² initiation rite is central for Bemba people and is performed about a month or two before a woman is married, in order for her to be prepared to take care of that marriage. *Imbusa* is taught by married women who have undergone the teaching as well. The Bemba people of Zambia are one of the seventy-three ethnic³ groups that practice *imbusa* (traditional Bemba premarital teachings for women) or its equivalent.

This preparation takes place both in rural areas as well as in the towns and cities. Every married Bemba woman who underwent the rite could be called upon to teach the young Bemba bride because after having gone through the teaching and experiencing marriage, she is capable of passing on that wisdom to another. In the *imbusa* space, instructions on married women's behavior and life in the community are passed down to the brides. Usually the bride's mother seeks out who can instruct her daughter in the age-old cultural skills that married women receive from their

¹ Using Wim Van Binsbergen' (n.d.:93) definition of ethnicity, I define the Bemba people in Van Binsbergen's (n.d. :93) words as to "include a minority of members who have gained their membership not at birth but only later in life, in the context of marriage, migration, language acquisition, adoption, the assumption of a new identity and life style, or religious conversion. Ethnic fields are differently organised at different places in the world and in different periods of human history". For detailed discussions on ethnicity change on Zambia's Copperbelt Province, see Mitchel 1956, Epstein and Van Binsbergen.

² *Imbusa* are sacred emblems/visual aids handed down to Bemba brides before the wedding. A detailed explanation of *imbusa* is given in chapter six, 6.2

³ As defined by Wim M. J. van Binsbergen (n.d. :93), ethnic group is a "named set of people".

predecessors, as Richards (1982), Rasing (2004) and Kaunda (2013) have noted. Women use the *imbusa* rite as a means of teaching the young bride secrets of being a “good wife”⁴. Traditional customs and rites such as these are often seen as the preserve of the “uneducated” and “rural” women. However, even educated, career⁵ and urban women, especially career women⁶ undergo these rites too (Kapwepwe⁷ 1994 and Kaunda, 2013). For instance, Lilian Siwila (2011: 6), an academic, admits that the teachings “influenced my thoughts on the value of the institution of marriage”.

Many, such as Simon Kapwepwe are known to have “campaigned for the preservation of Zambian culture.”⁸ Kapwepwe was the first vice president of democratic Zambia, and later became the minister of culture and local government. Kapwepwe was also a Bemba man from the royal clan. In that capacity as a man whose interest was to advance indigenous culture of the Zambians, he was invited to speak to University students pertaining to marriage. Kapwepwe (1994: 6) explains that most women looked forward to undergoing the teachings. Kapwepwe was dissatisfied with the colonial officials’ ways of government. He was involved in the liberation struggle for Zambia’s independence. He was a teacher and later studied pottery and journalism in India, as explained in a biography by Bwembya Mutale. In his own words, Kapwepwe (1994: 6) stated “...*banjitile pa university of Zambia kukuya landa pafibelelo fyesu, leelo ico balefwaisha kuti intitibile pacuupo; ifyo abakale balecita. Ilyo napwile ukulanda, umukalamba wabo atile icotumwitile kwisamweba ngefintu natupamfiwa, abakashana na balumendo tulekula ukwabula amafunde nangu yamo.*” “I was called upon at the university of Zambia to talk about our traditions, however what they really wanted was for me to emphasize on marriage; after I had spoken, their leader expressed concern stating that ‘we called to tell you that we are desperate as young women and men as we are going through life without any traditional

⁴ Being a good wife is understood as being a woman who takes care of her husband as she was instructed in *imbusa* teachings; that she is able to sexually satisfy him, make good meals as well as take care of household chores, family and in-laws.

⁵ While the term “career woman” sometimes disparagingly refers to women who have their priorities set on career more than marriage and children, in this study I refer to career women as women who have their priorities set on both work and marriage/family.

⁶ Career women in this study refer to women who have been to university or college and are working in various fields.

⁷ All translations of Simon Kapwepwe from his book *Icuupo Nobuyantanshi* are mine.

⁸ *Zambian watchdog* <http://www.zambiawatchdog.com/remembering-mwansa-kapwepwe/> [accessed May 11, 2016].

teachings’.”⁹ This “desperation” on the part of the students to understand traditional teachings concerning marriage for their ostensibly modern worldviews and lifestyles demonstrates the importance of my present study. How do Bemba career women negotiate *amafunde yambusa* (marital teachings, the term *amafunde* means teachings/instructions) in their everyday life - at their place of work and at home? I explored this question through an examination of the way Bemba women live out the teachings, whether they simply endorse the teachings through their faithful enactment of them, or whether they creatively negotiate what is important to them for “successful marriages”.

This qualitative¹⁰ study focused on what informs such negotiations with the teachings and how these negotiations take place. I framed my understanding of the ways in which women enact the teachings of these rituals in their daily lives, subsequent to their training as “negotiated feminism”. Nnaemeka (2003), in her article “Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa’s Way”, shows how “nego-feminism” as a postcolonial and decolonial theory challenges ideas that women unquestioningly accept oppression and cultural practices that are life denying, to their own detriment. Nego-feminism is relevant to this study because I looked at whether Bemba women accept *imbusa* teachings without negotiating some of its aspects or they actually question and negotiate certain aspects of these teachings.

This study drew on previous research on the indigenous Bemba *imbusa* teachings. *Imbusa* teachings are conceptualized, as a curriculum for Bemba women’s marital preparation because the teachings in *amafunde yambusa* are taught at *icisungu* and *imbusa* initiations which Simon Kapwepwe (1994: 50) calls *insukulu* (school). When a woman behaves contrary to what is in the *imbusa* curriculum, people usually say *tabafundwa* (she is not taught/cultured/educated). Kapwepwe clarifies that men have no specific school where they are initiated into becoming men; they generally learn from their fathers, uncles, friends and grandfathers during socializing. Kapwepwe (1994: 48) explains that men learnt about their code of conduct during *insaka* (palaver equivalent, this is where Bemba men used to meet and discuss issues affecting the community) and while working and hunting with friends,

⁹ This is my translation of Kapwepwe from Bemba.

¹⁰ Creswell (2003: 15 and 2009: 17) explains that a qualitative study focus on a small number of participants and depth of engagement with participants. I kept in contact with participants via emails and social media such as WhatsApp for clarifications.

parents and so on. Mwizenge Tembo (2012: 102) has described *insaka* as being a round, thatch-roofed building. *Insaka* had about eight to ten wooden pillars to support the structure. I would say it would be equivalent to a gazebo except it was a permanent structure and was usually at the edge of the village, as noted by Tembo (2012: 102). Further, Tembo (2012) describes *insaka* as having numerous functions ranging from carving household implements such as axes, mortar, pestles and stools to weaving reed mats and baskets. Most importantly, men at the *insaka* heard, attended and made decisions about village disputes such as dowry amount, which was decided at the gazebo *insaka*. Issues of adultery were settled in this space (it operated as a court of law in that sense) as well as approval of potential marriages. Boys were taught hunting skills, to solve riddles, as well as obedience. This was a space of socializing for the Bemba men. However, for women, learning is “*pansukulu*” (at school); in Kapwepwe’s (1994: 48) own words, “women were more privileged than men because they had “*nensukulu*” (a school) where they learnt all these”. The *imbusa* teaching space is hence, referred to as a school.

Bemba women go through *imbusa* or *amafunde* (teachings or instructions) in order to be prepared for successful and long lasting marriages (Hinfelaar 1994: 12).¹¹ It must be noted that other ethnic groups go through these or similar teachings on the Copperbelt and other provinces as well. *Imbusa* teachings are an essential part of Bemba cultural life. It involves older married women sitting down with a young bride for between three weeks to three months (it used to be longer) and giving her knowledge on what is expected of her in marriage and society as a whole when she enters the institution of marriage. It is necessary for Bemba people that a woman is taught (*ukufundwa*) before entering into a new life as a married woman. Kapwepwe (1994: 35) alludes to this fact, because a woman is considered the priestess of the home and custodian of the Bemba traditions (Hinfelaar 1994, Kaunda 2010). These cultural teachings are important for Bemba people because they are regarded as crucial for marital longevity (Kaunda 2013: 1).

As custodians of *imbusa*, Bemba women hold *imbusa* teachings in high esteem. Bemba people have two separate society rituals for young women. First, at puberty when a girl has her first menstruation she goes through *icisungu* (the wonder) and she is called *nacisungu*. *Icिसungu* is a word derived from

¹¹ See also Rasing (2001: 11); Kapwepwe (1994); Kaunda (2013); Lumbwe (2004); Mushibwe (2009); Richards (1982) and Haynes (2013).

icisungusho (a miracle). This understanding could be due to the perplexity that the first menstrual blood brings for the girl. Within Bemba traditional society, *icisungu* was celebrated because it was perceived as a miracle having befallen (*ukuwa icisungu*) the girl and she receives the divine gift of feminine sexuality from *Lesa* God. *Ukuwilwa icisungu* means ‘a miracle has befallen on her’ as a result she has become matured or has come of age (*nakuula*) or she has matured. The divine gift has fallen on her as a result of *ukukuula* (she has grown or matured or has come of age), and the consequence of *ukuwilwa icisungu* (befallen with the first menstruation) is growth or maturity or coming of age. In precolonial Zambia, a girl was usually married immediately after the *icisungu* initiation. That is why; *imbusa* was part of the ritual of *icisungu*. However, in contemporary Zambia, *imbusa* teachings are given to a young bride who is over the age of eighteen years and is about to be married. (For detailed discussion see Haynes, 2015 and Mupeta, 2014). The *imbusa* teachings taught at marriage, comprise explicit sex dance and other aspects relating to family and home while at *icisungu* a girl is taught hygiene and keeping her virginity intact. A married woman, who has not undergone these teachings, as Kaunda and Reddy (2013: 120) explain, is perceived as *chitongo*, which means uncultured/untaught. The Bemba worldview traditionally equated the act of educating women to social progress. Thus, demand was placed on culturally educating a woman than a man, as women were not only the custodians of tradition but also the Bemba society found its essence and meaning through women who held the community together (Hinfelaar 1994: 14). The teachings of *imbusa* have a critical place in the Bemba worldview as Bemba people believe that in order to live harmoniously and peacefully in a community, a code of conduct to guide action is important for each group. However, the women’s code of conduct, especially in marriage was and still is more pronounced because of the critical role they played in pre-colonial Bemba matrilineal society. Bemba women were perceived as *cibinda wa ng’anda* (heads of the house), *kabumba wa mapepo* (creator and priest of prayers), and *nacimbusa wa chisunga* (guardian of tradition) (Hinfelaar 1994: 12; see also Kaunda 2010; Rasing 2001). However, the history of these teachings is not fully known except for what Joseph Corbeil (1982: 13) has written, which is that Bemba people came to Zambia with these teachings from Angola during bantu migration around the 16th century.

A Bemba woman is ultimately responsible for everything that goes on in her marital home from infidelity to infertility and how to run a home, as Rasing (2001: 50) and Richards (1982) note. The main content of the teaching is to prepare a woman to live in harmony with her husband and the

community, and has emphasis on intimacy. The Bemba *Ng'andu* clan (crocodile clan), a royal clan of Bemba people, according to the mythology, began with a queen who fell from heaven, *Mumbi Mukasa, liulu*. She was found by a chief while hunting in the forest, and later, the two married and had three sons and a daughter named *Chilufya*. When they were exiled from the land of origin, *Chilufya* stole the insignia and took the seeds of queenship in her hair to begin the new lineage of queenship in the present Bemba land (Maxwell 1983: 59).

1.1. The Research Problem and Objectives

Much of the research done on the *imbusa* initiation rite has concentrated on rural women, while studies that have focused on urban women have not attempted to show how these women live and negotiate or navigate the teachings in everyday life. This study focused on how Bemba career women navigate these teachings at their places of work and at home. The research question asked in this study was:

How do Bemba career married women engage with the traditional cultural curriculum of marriage (amafunde yambusa) in their daily lives at home and workplace?

Stemming from this question, I investigated the following sub-questions.

1. What are the *imbusa* teachings regarding Bemba career women?
2. How do married career women learn, negotiate, and resist *amafunde yambusa* in their homes and at places of work?
3. Why do Bemba married career women negotiate, engage or resist *amafunde yambusa* in their homes and at places of work in the way that they do?

1.1.1. Research Objectives

The objectives for this study were firstly: to discuss the *imbusa* teachings regarding Bemba career women and determine how married career women learn, negotiate, and resist *amafunde yambusa* in their homes and at places of work. Secondly, to determine why Bemba married career women

negotiate, engage or resist *amafunde yambusa* in their homes and at places of work in the way that they do. In order to meet these objectives, I used two theoretical frameworks.

1.2. Theoretical Framework: Feminist Post/Decolonial Theorising

This study was built on the concept of nego-feminism, which is derived from postcolonial and decolonial theories (discussed in detail in chapter 3).

1.2.1. Nego-feminism

The study uses the theory of nego-feminism coined by a Nigerian woman in the diaspora, Obioma Nnaemeka (2003: 360-361) as “the feminism of negotiation; no ego feminism”. Nego-feminism is a postcolonial¹² concept. Rasing (2001: 15) for instance, has noted that “from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial” era; women have re-negotiated their positions in societies they live in. This therefore means that post-colonial theories are about cultural transformation, because women negotiating their positions means women seeking cultural transformation. Postcolonialism was born, according to Sanjay Seth, Leela Gandhi and Michael Dutton (2002: 7), out of many political, cultural and intellectual struggles. In this sense, it is not a cliché to note that culture is not static; it changes with time despite some things remaining seemingly the same. Employing postcolonial theory is inevitably to engage in postcolonialism, which focuses on “history, agency, representation, identity and discourse” as Margaret Kumar (2000: 82) notes. Post-colonial theory focuses on politics, power, culture and religious issues in relation to colonial dominance. Pal Ahluwalia (2001: 4) emphasises that “post-colonialism cannot be an all-encompassing term. Rather, post-colonialism embodies the effects of colonialism, whilst recognising the specificity of each case in which it is deployed.”

I locate nego-feminism as a postcolonial and decolonial theory, and it is used in this study to

¹² I use postcolonial theory in this study as a theoretical technique used to interpret, analyse and critique the cultural practices emerging from colonialism. I am aware that the prefix ‘post-’ in ‘post- colonial’ refers to the chronological period from colonial to independence or post-colonial. On the contrary, the unhyphenated term ‘postcolonial’ describes liberation and subversive responses to colonialization of African cultural practices, beliefs, being and subjectivity.

understand the indigenous Bemba *amafunde yambusa* as a traditional Bemba curriculum¹³ that prepares women for marriage. Building on the indigenous traditions, Glynis Parker (2012: 132) has argued for means of ownership and *creative resilience* [Italics mine] for women. Indigenous tradition does not happen in a vacuum, it is made in everyday negotiations, in this case by women as they use the *imbusa* space to empower themselves for cultural transformation. The question is not whether cultural transformation occurs, but rather, what kind of transformation occurs – negative or positive? While seeking an alternative indigenous feminism, Parker (2012: 140) has corresponded with Nnaemeka (2003) on women negotiating culture, actually encompassing motherhood, marriage and family with men as part of the whole process. While there are feminist views¹⁴ which argue that motherhood and marriage are essentialist ideals constructed for women and are not necessarily empowering, according to African women such as Oduyoye (1999), motherhood is not inferior to any other role, just as it has been argued in the RoSa factsheet¹⁵ by Mieke Maerten (2004: 3). While Maerten (2004: 3) intended to show how motherhood is perceived in Africa, she has essentialised that “being a woman implies being a mother in Africa”. For Bemba people, only a woman that has undergone *amafunde* can be called a mother even if she does not have biological children of her own. Furthermore, Elaine Hansen (1997: 6) explains that:

Feminists have demanded and gained new attention for the previously ignored problems of motherhood, but they have not arrived at consensus about how to redefine the concept or adjust the system. Many (but by no means all) women wish to refuse motherhood on the old terms without abandoning either the heavy responsibilities or the intense pleasures of bearing and raising children. The fear that no one will take care of our children if we don't, makes it difficult to go forward, even as it seems impossible to go willingly back.

Nego-feminism is used in this study as a lens to examine the ways in which *amafunde yambusa* as indigenous knowledge can be used as a resource for Bemba married career women in society. Nego-feminism as a theory is based on the premise that women do not just passively appropriate patriarchal cultural demands but are constantly negotiating culture. Nnaemeka (2003: 362) succinctly explains that in order to reconcile theory and engagement, there is a need to clear the ground in

¹³ Bemba traditional curriculum means the *imbusa* traditional teachings as they are taught currently, presented in a course outline format.

¹⁴See for example Adrienne Rich 1986; Sara Ruddick 1989; Betty Friedan 1992; Judith Butler 1993

¹⁵ The RoSa factsheet is a feminist publication. “Since its founding in 1978, RoSa is the place in Flanders to look for information and documentation about equal opportunities, emancipation policy and women’s studies.”

order to “dwell/duel not only on what theory is but, more importantly, on what theory does, can and cannot do, and should and should not do”.

Mercy Oduyoye (1995: 17) has noted that most rites are performed on, for and because of women. Therefore, women’s positions are usually for the benefit of the community as a whole. Both men and African women theologians have researched issues of African rites and their impact on the wellbeing and health of women. These rites, many scholars have argued, force women to obtain a certain identity and they live with that identity in a constraining way (Alcolf 1988: 415). However, in this study I used nego-feminism as a tool to understand the elements that promote equality within *amafunde yambusa* and suggest equality in marriages for Bemba people. Nnaemeka (2003: 377) argues “African feminisms challenges through negotiation and compromise.” In this way, I explored ways in which Bemba career women have compromised in their homes and work places in order to reach an understanding in these spaces. I also investigated what values or virtues they draw from the *imbusa* in order to make the teaching more viable (life-giving) in constructing critical emancipation in ways they resist some aspects of the teachings. Nego-feminism is an approach of subverting the normative. As Nnaemeka (2003: 353) succinctly explains, nego-feminism “knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines.” In utilizing nego-feminism, I sought to understand how Bemba women have negotiated the *imbusa* space as a space where Bemba women learn their negotiation skills. Nnaemeka (2003: 377) clarifies that nego-feminism has the double meaning of “give and take/exchange” and “cope with successfully/go around”. This means that in this study, I explored whether women are passive recipients (as was established in my Master’s research in 2013) of the *imbusa* teachings or whether they subvert aspects that may be life-denying and threatening to their well-being and use it for their benefit. This study further employed postcolonial feminist pedagogy as a theoretical lens in exploring how Bemba women negotiate *imbusa*.

1.2.2. Postcolonial Feminist Pedagogy

This study focused on women’s traditional teachings and learning and necessitated employing a feminist pedagogical lens to explore both the delivery and reception of the *imbusa* traditional cultural

curriculum. Feminist pedagogy is a flexible teaching and learning technique that seeks to be dialogical in nature and links with Paulo Freire's (1996) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Linda Keesing-Styles 2003). I am using feminist pedagogy as a lens through which to explore how Bemba women negotiate the teachings of *imbusa*. Bemba women are the ones given the task of teaching their spouses what they had been taught from *banacimbusa*, and most women explain everything in detail to their spouses to show what they had learnt in *imbusa*.

There are various definitions of feminist pedagogy; however, three similar principles are as follows. The first is seeking to avoid hierarchy, as Diana Philip (2010: 10) shows, between instructor and those being instructed. In *imbusa* teachings, all the people present are women, but this does not mean that that hierarchy is not part of the *imbusa* space. Bemba people's values are that the young need to respect elders. How does this respect for elders play out in the *imbusa* space where older women with experience in marriage teach the young Bemba brides? Does this respect for elders give room for making the teachings dialogical between the instructors who are older married women and the young brides being taught? Second, experience is a resource in feminist pedagogy that seeks to bring about change (Philip 2010: 2; see also Freire 1996: 56). Maynard (2004: 135) demonstrates that experience should not be seen as something that people have; rather, questions of how experiences are produced should be asked. Thus, I investigated the possibility that Bemba women's experiences are constructed during these *imbusa* teachings. *Banacimbusa* bring their experiences in marriage and society to the *imbusa* 'classroom'¹⁶, in this sense *banacimbusa* and the bride can achieve a new awareness of life as a married woman in society and at the place of work. The important fact is that older women stand in solidarity with the young in order to help the young face their life in marriage and society with confidence: as the Bemba proverb says *umulilo ucingilile abakalamba taocha*, meaning, "A fire that is guarded by adults does not burn anyone". To achieve this transformative thinking, both *banacimbusa* and the bride need to realise that individual understandings of society norms can be upheld in fresh, critical ways as Freire (1996: 56) has shown. Third, feminist pedagogy is a way of teaching that inspires learners or students to move from being passive recipients of knowledge to becoming "co-creators of knowledge" thereby becoming agents of social change (Philip 2010: 2; see also Kaunda and Reddy 2013: 121).

¹⁶ This is not a conventional Western style classroom where there are more students and one teacher. The *imbusa* classroom has more teachers and one or two students.

1.3. Structure of the Dissertation

The study is divided into ten chapters as follows. **Chapter one**, introducing the study, focuses on the problem statement, objectives, and methodology in relation to the significance of the study. **Chapter two** reviews the literature concerning the phenomenon *imbusa* and career women's agency. **Chapter three** focuses on the theoretical framework employed in this study. **Chapter four** presents the Copperbelt province which was the location of the study. This chapter looks at the Copperbelt province and its formation in order to show the context in which *imbusa* teachings were transposed from Northern Province of Zambia in the colonial period. **Chapter five** discusses the current *imbusa* curriculum as it is taught. This chapter sets out to interrogate the *imbusa* curriculum of Bemba women and whether and how meanings and conceptions of *amafunde yambusa* as indigenous knowledge were altered during the colonial era. The chapter is a critical exposition of whether (due to encounter with different cultures) *imbusa* is still taught and whether meanings are interpreted as they were in pre-colonial times. **Chapter six** discusses the methodology used and locates the study in the Copperbelt province of Zambia. **Chapter seven** presents the findings of the study and shows how Bemba women negotiate *amafunde yambusa* in their homes. The purpose of this chapter is to thematically describe, analyze and theorize Bemba career women's agency in their understanding and negotiation of *amafunde yambusa* between their work place and home. **Chapter eight** demonstrates how *amafunde yambusa* has impacted Bemba women in their work space and how they navigate and negotiate these teachings at their place of work. Finally, **Chapter nine** proposes some alternative ways of teaching *Imbusa* for affirmation of life in the context of married career women. **Chapter ten** provides a general conclusion in which I summarize the arguments of the study.

Having outlined the orientation and background of this study, the following chapter will examine literature written on Bemba women's *imbusa*¹⁷ teachings. Further literature will be reviewed concerning women, career, family and agency.

¹⁷ While there are other ethnic groups in Zambia that have begun to use the notion of *imbusa* to refer to their premarital teachings, the notion is borrowed from the Bemba people of the Northern part of Zambia.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to gain insight into the *amafunde yambusa* through the work of various authors who have written on this phenomenon. Within Zambia, several ethnic groups have similar rites to *imbusa*. This study however deliberately and intentionally focuses on the Bemba *imbusa* rite because in the Copperbelt province, as the Bemba people are the majority ethnic group that migrated there. As a researcher, I am a Bemba woman who has undergone *amafunde*. Since Western anthropologists and relatively few Zambian or Bemba people have carried out much research on *imbusa* teachings, I will draw on the anthropologist's findings.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section explores the value of marriage among the Bemba people of Zambia. The second section focuses on the impact of Westernization on *imbusa*; while the third section captures the agency that Bemba women demonstrate within the *imbusa* rite. Fourth, the literature on women and work generally is explored, and finally, the fifth section shows women and family/home. Since *imbusa* are traditional premarital Bemba teachings specifically for women, it is important to discuss the value of marriage among the Bemba. Much scholarship (both African and Western) has focused on women and rites in Africa. Kapwepwe (1994: 49), for instance, in his book *Icuupo Nobuyantanshi* (which means "Marriage and Progress"), has summarized the Bemba women's *imbusa* teachings as well as men's code of conduct and the importance of these teachings for the Bemba people. In this book, Kapwepwe (1994: 4) stated that in 1969 he was called to give a talk on *intambi shesu*, "our traditions", to students of the University of Zambia who wanted him to emphasize issues concerning marriage. Kapwepwe's (1994) concern was that after Zambia gained independence from British rule, the young people were following "white people's culture" and abandoning their own, which they perceived to be uncivilized. Kapwepwe (1994: 12) explains that "*icuupo caba emufula wantuntuko yesu, leelo tacatala acipanga amafunde yachiko pamo namalango*", interpreted as "marriage is the beginning of our ethnicity; however, it has never made its own instructions and laws". The implication of Kapwepwe's statement is that a strong, reliable, morally upright ethnic group or community is one that has children born and bred within the confines of a marriage and not outside marriage. For the Bemba, marriage is sacred and one should be thoroughly

prepared for it before one is finally married that is why gradual steps are taken from engagement to marriage. Kapwepwe (1994: 19) explained that to live harmoniously in a community, the Bemba people have established that there has to be a set of rules or a code of conduct for every group of people within that community. Therefore, the girls go through *ichisungu* initiation at puberty and graduate into the *imbusa* initiation rite at the time of their marriage. These initiation rites point to the value and sacredness of marriage among the Bemba.

2.1. Value of Marriage among the Bemba

Bemba people perceive marriage as sacred and as such there is need for thorough instruction before a woman and a man are married, as I established in my Master's research "A Search for Life-Giving Marriage: The *Imbusa* Initiation Rite as a Space for Constructing Wellbeing among Married Bemba Women of Zambia" (Kaunda, 2013). Marriage gives both women and men a social status of respect and honor among peers and the community at large.¹⁸ Women however, are the ones who undergo or receive these marital instructions for a month or more before their wedding, because according to the Bemba, the home is a woman's responsibility and therefore, she is instructed in the ways of caring for her home as well as her family, in-laws and children. In my Master's research (Kaunda, 2013) it was established from the interviews that Bemba, and most Zambian women, hold marriage and the *Imbusa* teachings as sacred. I further demonstrated that Bemba women are given these teachings in order to become competent in home managing (Kaunda 2013: 3-11). Three recommendations were made to promote balance in the teachings and these are, a need for African feminist *banacimbusa* (Kaunda 2013: 47), African feminist *imbusa* pedagogy (Kaunda 2013: 49), and a holistic approach to sexuality (Kaunda 2013: 51). This study builds on my Master's thesis, which established that Bemba women have a space where they stand in solidarity and share secrets to a long lasting marriage.¹⁹ I admit here that some of my views (since my Master's research) have changed: for instance, my understanding of Bemba women's sexuality as taught in *imbusa*. *Imbusa* teachings give Bemba women the guidelines to own their sexuality and while the teaching would be seen as encouraging women to give sexual pleasure to their husbands, in essence women find

¹⁸ See for example, Richards (1982); Rasing (2001); Kaunda (2013).

¹⁹ See also Lilian Siwila's (2011) PhD thesis as well as Jonathan Kangwa's (2012) Master's thesis and Mutale M. Kaunda and Chammah J. Kaunda's (2013) article.

pleasure in the process of pleasuring their husbands because they are not passive, they are in fact, active participants and usually lead men in various sexual positions. Elsewhere Kaunda and Kaunda (2016: 174) have established that:

The argument that in women-only spaces such as *icisungu* and *imbusa* women are instructed to give pleasure to their husbands may be true in some cultures. Nonetheless, in *imbusa*, women are also taught proactive sexual agency—they have to be tactical in the sexual act regardless of who initiates it—the husband or the wife.

I established that in marriage, “Sexual relationship is dependent so much on the husband desiring his wife, indicating that should he not desire his wife, then there is a problem” (Kaunda 2013: 40). This is also similar to Phiri and Nadar’s observation of a Zulu woman when they argue that “the resignation of this woman to her fate of being married lies in this traditional worldview that it is her destiny to get married and to satisfy her husband’s needs” (2009: 14). Further, it was established that women are taught in *imbusa* to give themselves unreservedly to their husbands even if they are aware that their spouse is having extramarital relationships. According to my Master’s research, a Bemba woman “is socialised to believe that only the husband has needs and her duty is to meet them. This implies that the husband’s sexual needs come before and above those of the wife’s”. Having reviewed the literature further and carried out further empirical research, my position has developed from these previously held views. For instance, elsewhere in a recent article, “*Infunkutu*: The Bemba Sexual Dance as Women’s Sexual Agency”, Kaunda and Kaunda (2016: 159) have established that “*infunkutu* (sexual dance) in *imbusa* provides women with liminal spaces for unregulated sexual dialogue and uncensored explicit demonstrations of sexual mastery while also creating their own agency.”

In the *imbusa* teaching space, women are taught about their husbands; therefore, it is their role as women in the marriage relationship that is emphasized. There are a few aspects of the teaching on sexuality that are an exception, in that they are mutual - such as thanking one’s husband after *ukupanga icuupo* (lit. to make the marriage, after the act of making love). Appreciating someone for the pleasure they give is part of living amicably as human beings, and men have to thank their spouses after receiving pleasure as well. This means that it is necessary for both spouses to appreciate each other after the act of making the marriage. In fact, I would claim that if Bemba men were taught as extensively as women are, they would emphasize men pleasing their wives sexually

because a Bemba man that fails to satisfy his wife sexually would be ridiculed. Kaunda and Kaunda (2016: 170) demonstrated that a Bemba “bride is taught how to assist her husband by serving him food such as cassava (root or tuber and leaves) and peanuts which are said to be libido boosters in Bemba culture. A bride is also taught on certain sexual positions that would help prolong her husband’s ejaculation.” While marriage is about companionship and friendship, intimacy is an immense and integral aspect of marriage hence, the emphasis on the preparation of Bemba women. *Imbusa* teachings are delivered in three ways: music, visual aids as well as storytelling (Kaunda 2013: 44). Every teaching is passed on or handed down, through songs and then interpreted for the bride. In my Master’s research, I used psychosocial theories to analyze the lived experiences of *imbusa* for Zambian women living in Pietermaritzburg South Africa.

Thera Rasing (2001) is an anthropologist who has focused on initiation rites of Bemba people in Zambia and lectures at the University of Zambia. In her book, *The Bush Burnt, the Stones Remain: Female Initiation Rites in Urban Zambia*, Rasing (2001: xi) has noted that despite Christianity and colonialism and many changes in Zambia, which could have annihilated the Bemba people’s initiation rites, they (rites) are alive and well in the twenty-first century. In this book, Rasing (2001: 1) attempted to interpret Bemba initiation rites that appear to be affected by Westernization in urban areas. According to Rasing (2001: 3), at first glance, one may think the rites are obsolete; however, “uniformization in some aspects seems to be inextricably intertwined with the emergence of new differences”. In short, despite the many aspects that have affected and changed urban Zambia, the initiation rites are resilient and have continued to be performed in the same way as they were performed in the precolonial era. Lumbwe (2009: iii) argues that “despite political, socio-economic and socio-cultural changes in the Zambian society, Bemba Indigenous Knowledge Systems still exist, although not in their original state. Continuity and change are evident in the current *ubwinda* (wedding) ceremonies, which are an amalgamation of some of the elements from the pre-colonial *ubwinda* ceremonies and those of the white wedding ceremonies of the post-independence era”. Some of the contents of the teachings may have changed but the processes and methods of teaching have remained. Further, Rasing (2001: 7-10) explains the formation of the Copperbelt by the colonial government. The fieldwork for this study was also carried out in this Province. The people on the Copperbelt are multi-ethnic and their *lingua franca* is Bemba (Rasing 2003; Mayondi 2010;

Haynes 2013). The agreement among the number of scholars is that *imbusa* teachings have been resilient despite countless changes that have taken place in Zambia.

In the book *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990*, Henrieta Moore and Megan Vaughan (1994: 156) agreed with Richards' argument that for the Bemba, marriage was not an institution but rather a set of processes. A number of scholars have explained these processes or steps taken before marriage in detail.²⁰ From the time that a bride and groom share their intentions to marry (with their families), there are steps that are taken before they marry and even after they are married. These processes are a way that families (the bride and groom's) made and still make sure that the couple take careful thought and preparation for their marriage. Lumbwe (2009) has given detailed steps that are taken in the process of marriage among the Bemba. Lumbwe mentions four²¹ specific steps that are taken before marriage. *Ichisumina nsalamu* is literally the acceptance of *lobola* by the bride's family, meaning that the family has accepted the groom's request to marry their daughter. Second, in *ichilanga mulilo*, translated as "showing the fire", the groom is introduced to the bride's family's cuisine; there is traditional food and drinks at this ceremony. Third, *ubwina* is the wedding, a public display of how the family has raised their daughter well and with good morals. Fourth is *amatebeto*, which is the feast of appreciating the groom by the bride's family, for taking good care of the bride in marriage.²² These steps for Bemba marriage are not exhaustive, however for a detailed discussion on these steps, Lumbwe and other scholars²³ could be consulted. Lumbwe (2009: 67-98) has focused his entire chapter three on these steps and processes of Bemba marriage. In fact, some grooms' families may even decide to be the ones who determine which *banacimbusa* should teach their daughter-in-law; this often happens when there is an inter-ethnic marriage; for instance, a Bemba man marrying a Chewa woman.

Generally, most Bemba girls are raised with an expectation that they will get married one day and need to prepare for that marriage slowly and carefully. As a result, at the age of eight (pre-puberty),

²⁰ Richards (1982); Yezenge (2001); Rasing (1995).

²¹ There may be more than four steps taken depending upon the family /ies.

²² See for instance Yezenge (2001); Kapwepwe (1994); Lumbwe (2009).

²³ Yezenge (2001); Kapwepwe (1994); Lumbwe (2009).

Bemba girls are taught the process of *ukukunda*²⁴ (elongating the labia minora) for instance. This is one of the rituals perceived as an important pre-marriage ritual for a Bemba woman and it is the duty of the paternal aunt or grandmother (maternal or paternal) to teach the girl how to elongate the labia as I explained earlier (Kaunda 2013: 1). Thereafter she can perform this ritual alone or with a group of friends. In his book, *Beliefs And Religious Practices Of The Bemba And Neighboring Tribes*, Edouard Labrecque (n.d.:48) also explains that Bemba girls are asked to elongate their labia at a tender age while their breasts are still small and the practice of labia elongation carries on until they are married. According to Labrecque (n.d: 48), a girl who had not elongated her labia was seen as uncultured and was mocked even by her friends. She was called as “‘*icipumbu*’ a fool; ‘*ashala mushili*’ she remains virgin soil; ‘*ashala kwipo*’ she remains untaught (not initiated); ‘*ashala munkama ya babiye*’ she remains without a secret that her friends have and share; ‘*ashala mu mulombo*’ she remains (is) like a tree growing alone on an anthill; ‘*ni cipelelo*’ (*ukupelela* = to reach the end = no future).” The elongation of labia is believed to increase sexual pleasure in marriage and is alleged to easily open up the birth canal during childbirth.²⁵

Nkiru Nzegwu (2011) writes about the purposes of labia elongation among Baganda women of Uganda in a similar way. Labia elongation, Nzegwu (2011: 265) explains, familiarized girls to “the act of self-stimulation or masturbation thereby leading to the discovery of other erogenous zones”. This is an aspect of marital preparation for Bemba brides as well. Likewise, anthropologist Anne-Marie Dauphin-Tinturier (2008: 77) addresses “a sexual manipulation – the elongation of the labia – as a condition to ensure the marriageability of Bemba girls in the plateau region of northern Zambia”. Labia elongation or *ukukuna* or *ukwagala* (*ukwangala* is translated as “to play”) is a teaching given in *Imbusa* School for Bemba women; it is one of the rituals that a Bemba woman is taught as she grows up and it is enforced in *imbusa* teachings. Dauphin-Tinturier (2008: 80) has explained that this is important for Bemba people and has benefits for pleasure and helps during childbirth. The implication is that Bemba women are taught the importance of sexual pleasure in marriage, according to Dauphin-Tinturier. She then elaborates on the marriage rite and *icisungu* initiation. Dauphin-Tinturier (2008: 92-93) in her elaboration of the Bemba initiation rites then gives an interpretation of the rite. She states that the marriage rite has evolved three times: in precolonial

²⁴ See Richards (1982); Rasing (2001); Haynes (2013); Kaunda (2013).

²⁵ Richards (1982); Rasing (2001); and Kaunda (2013).

past, the Bemba marriage was controlled by *banacimbusa*, then later the bride was in control of the marriage relationship with her husband, and currently, women choose their own husbands and seem more in control. This means that Bemba women have agency even in choosing their own spouse/husband and do not leave it to parents or family members to choose for them. While a Bemba woman or man has the liberty to choose her/his spouse, the family has a say whether the chosen spouse is ideal or not.

Initiation rites for women are a common feature in most African cultures and are not only performed among the Bemba. For instance, Heine Becker (2004) in her chapter “*Efundula: Women’s Initiation, Gender and Sexual Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Northern Namibia*”, has explored the rite of passage for marriage among Owambo women of Northern Namibia. Becker (2004: 40) explains, “Owambo women’s initiation was, first of all, a rite of social maturation. It publicly transformed the initiates, ‘brides’ (*aafuko* in *oshiNdonga*, *ovafuko* in *oshiKwanyama*), into adults, completing them with the essential attributes of their new status”. The Bemba women as well are transferred into responsible adults after the teachings. The Owambo rite is specifically for women as they prepare for marriage and like the Bemba women, they are given instructions on how a married woman ought to take care of her marriage. After having undergone the rite, a woman was considered ready to have child/ren –even if she was unmarried for Owambo women, while for Bemba women, conception was expected to occur within the confines of marriage and young girls were cautioned to keep their virginity intact until they were married. While Owambo women had to wait on the chief to set a date for the cycle of initiation rites, Bemba women set the dates and only asked the blessing of the chief. Owambo initiates assumed male names in their liminal stages and “were regarded as being possessed by the spirits of their namesakes. Armed with knobkerries and accompanied by prepubescent girls (*omufundijhi*) they moved freely throughout the country” as Becker (2004: 41) has shown. There are similarities and differences between Bemba and Owambo rites of passage although the result seems to be the same – how to take care of one’s husband and home effectively. Becker’s aim in this chapter was to show the tension between colonial and traditional rites. Tensions seem to have existed between colonial officials’ ideas and indigenous culture in Africa not only among the Bemba of Zambia.

Christine Mushibwe (2009) has focused her research on how marital cultural practices among Tumbuka rural girls and women of Zambia are a contributing factor to their illiteracy. According to Mushibwe (2009: 1), “The stronghold that the cultural tradition has on the locals has further resulted in conflicts with modern schooling, which is viewed as spreading ‘white’ man’s culture and values”. Mushibwe (2009: 217) further argues from the data she collected that Tumbuka people believe that education annuls indigenous customs. Mushibwe has explained that traditional customs have negatively affected girls and women’s literacy. The teachings Mushibwe has written on are the equivalent to Bemba *imbusa* teachings. In my previous study (Kaunda, 2013), I held similar views that these teachings are oppressive for women; with that view, I often questioned why women still held on to these teachings despite the teaching being seemingly ‘against’ them. As mentioned above, my view has since developed as I read more literature and interacted with Bemba women who enlightened me further on *imbusa* teachings as well as using decolonial theory to investigate the *imbusa* rite. This led me to the realization that *imbusa* gives Bemba women tools to be agents of their wellbeing in marriage. However, I grapple with whether the teachings render the same or equivalent tools for women’s agency in their workplace.

Icisungu rite is a transition from one stage in life (child) to another (adult).²⁶ At *icisungu*, the girls are perceived as having matured because *Lesa* (God) (Kaunda and Kaunda 2016: 161) has endowed them with the ability to procreate at this stage. La Fontain (1986: 11), in her book *Initiation*, observes that the performances of initiation rites are full of symbolism; it is in the symbolism that the meaning of the teaching is found. For instance, in her article “Zambia's *Kankanga* Dances: The Changing Life of Ritual”, Edith Turner (1987: 58) explains how the Ndembu²⁷ people of Zambia make a pubescent girl lie down in a fetal position as the rite is performed. This (fetal) position symbolically shows that she is still a child and the women would initiate her into womanhood according to Turner (1987: 58). For Bemba people this *icisungu* rite is just one of the various phases in the life of a Bemba girl’s preparation for marriage. From this phase, there awaits *imbusa* initiation

²⁶ At puberty the term used to describe the girl is *akula* (grown or matured) or that she is *kumaluba* which means that she has bloomed. This means that womanhood has been endowed on her by *Lesa*. Bemba girls were isolated at puberty to cleanse them of childhood and then they were initiated into adulthood. A girl was given food that has not been cooked such as fruits until the blood had ceased. See also Kangwa (2011: 11) and Turner (1982: 105).

²⁷ The Ndembu people of Zambia practice *Kankanga* rite for girls at puberty, which is similar to the Bemba *icisungu* rite for pubescent girls. Edith and Victor Turner have written on the Ndembu people’s rites broadly.

rite at the time of marriage. As one gets ready and prepares for marriage, she is given instructions on her responsibilities as a married woman. Erotic instructions are reinforced among many other instructions.

A Bemba woman was perceived as being responsible over her home and carried the responsibility of a priestess in the home. Hinfelaar in his 1994 book *Bemba Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change* (1892-1992) and Chammah Kaunda (2010) in his article “Reclaiming the Feminine Image of God in *Lesar*,” have given a detailed explanation of these roles that Bemba women held pre-colonially. These roles were enforced at *imbusa* teachings so that married women would learn their responsibility. Along with these responsibilities came social status.

Anthropologists have been fascinated with the rite of *imbusa* and hence a great deal of their focus has been on detailed ethnography of the rite. The early anthropologists like Richards (1956 and 1982) and some missionaries like (Corbeil 1982) had interest in the rite of passage that transformed Bemba girls into women, while recent or current researchers have been focusing on the fact that despite the many changes postcolonially, the Bemba still hold *imbusa* teachings in high esteem. Further, despite the fear and predictions of some early anthropologists and missionaries like Richards (1982) and Corbeil (1982) that the rite would die out, and despite modernity and Christianity, *imbusa* rites are resilient. Since the rite continues and is not extinct, contemporary anthropologists²⁸ continue to research on the rite. Still, other scholars such as Mushibwe (2009) would rather these rites were no longer in existence, as they believe that the teachings are the reason girls drop out of school. Mushibwe’s research focused on a Tumbuka rite, equivalent to Bemba *icisungu* and *imbusa* that is taught to Tumbuka girls at puberty. One of the findings in Mushibwe’s (2009: 280) fieldwork revealed that young girls are given instruction on the sex dance at puberty, after which the Tumbuka girls feel too grown up to stay in school. Hence, they would go out to experiment with what they had been taught; this has then led to unplanned and unwanted pregnancies and early marriages. Mushibwe (2009: 235) also revealed that male teachers begin to make sexual advances at these taught girls and request sexual favors from them.

²⁸ Haynes (2012) and (2013); Rasing (2001) and (2010).

A married woman has an important status in the community. She is perceived as someone with wisdom and is able to give proper instruction when called upon by the community to be part of the *banacimbusa* that may be giving instructions to a new bride. Much of the literature on initiation rites has focused on various aspects of African women's lives; from HIV and AIDS to the process of the rite as well as the intentions of the rite. A noticeable gap in the literature is a focus on how the teachings affects women who have undergone such instructions and how these women experience life after the teaching in their homes and at their places of work. This study is aimed at the everyday lives of married career women at home and places of work. It was the intention of this study to seek Bemba women's' lived experiences of *imbusa* after undergoing the teaching. Bemba and other women have taken *Imbusa* seriously from other ethnic groups within Zambia and even Zambians in diaspora, as my Master's research established, which means that *imbusa* is important in their lives. Zambian culture has received numerous influences and teachings from other cultures, and as a result, initiation rites have been affected in some aspects as shown below.

In this study, my interest was to demonstrate how Bemba career women utilise *imbusa* teachings in their workplace or whether and how *imbusa* teachings work against them in that setting.

2.2. Westernization of the Imbusa Rite

Colonialism brought with it numerous changes among the people of Zambia, as among other communities. For the Bemba people, colonialism also spread into the traditional premarital teachings, which led to changes in marriage.

In her 2010 unpublished paper, "Traditional, Modern and Christian Teachings in Marriages" presented at the Fenza conference under the theme "'The Man is the Head of the Household' – Do Culture, Bible and Modern Life Meet?" Rasing argues that changes in *imbusa* and marriage were inevitable with the colonisation of the Bemba people and the nation at large. Rasing (2010: 4) concluded that tradition, modernity and Christianity have had an impact on the *imbusa* teachings in Zambia. Rasing (2010) records that most Zambian people consider themselves as modern and often choose a modern Church wedding over a cultural wedding. Further, Lumbwe (2009) alludes to this

as well and further explains that even the kitchen party that was previously traditional²⁹ has taken on a modern turn. Rasing (2010: 4) argues that the modern marriage that Zambians opt for “have a gender imbalance... which means that they take the man as central in the marriage and actually forget about the traditional rights of the women”. What Rasing is suggesting is that pre-Westernised or traditional teachings such as *imbusa* had a more gender-balanced stance on the community and marriages.

With the influence of Westernisation, Rasing (2010: 5) argues, Zambian families have become nuclear and no longer extended as they previously were. Couples were surrounded by extended families and as such family was always nearby, if they needed advice or were faced with marital problems for instance. This relationship has broken down, because many couples are now live on their own in urban places and they no longer have to stay with their parents after the wedding. It has been argued that having extended family around was one of the ways in which marital problems for instance, were handled, and their predecessors aided the young couple. Adults in this sense are those predecessors who have experience of marriage and are able to bring sound advice when called upon by the couple. Rasing (2010: 4) further asserts that “modern couples are usually raised in traditional society, but with a lot of influences from modern, often western, education, television, radio, and so on. They tend to forget the traditional teachings for the marriage, or think they are obsolete, old fashioned.” This means that the impact that Westernisation has had on the Zambian people has not just been on the political, economic life; it has spread into families and marriages as well through the Westernisation of initiation rites. Hence, Rasing (2010: 5) concludes, “This situation of being ‘in-between’, being raised in traditional society, but want to be modern makes it difficult to know how one should behave”. Further, Rasing’s (2010: 11) conclusion is that “Traditional, modern and

²⁹ Although kitchen parties were introduced in Zambia after the Zambian borders were opened to other countries around 1991 according to Rasing (2001), they had a traditional aspect to in ways they were performed. The performance was related to *ukufumya*. When a girl reached puberty and was secluded to be thoroughly taught, the time of reintegration into society as a woman, people came with gifts while her family prepared a feast to celebrate. Traditional in the sense that a bride would sit on a reedmat while all the guests would sit on chairs. The bride sitting on the floor/reedmat symbolised her humility in asking for wisdom from those who had come to celebrate with her. Currently, brides would be seated on a sofa or any other form of chair at the same level as those who had come to celebrate with her. One of my participants (in my Masters research) in a conversation after the interview explained that the bride sitting on the floor while being taught or at kitchen parties meant that she was not at the same level of understanding and experience of marriage as those who had come to teach her. Those who were there to teach and celebrate with her had more knowledge and experience than she did and she was acknowledging that with the act of sitting on a reedmat or floor.

Christian norms are intertwined, and can hardly be separated in daily life in town.” In addition, with this intertwining of tradition, modernity and Christianity, my study seeks to explore how Bemba married career women experience all three in their homes and place of work. Likewise, Ault (1983), in his chapter “Making ‘Modern’ Marriage ‘Traditional’: State Power and the Regulation of Marriage in Colonial Zambia”, explains that the face of marriage was distorted with the Western ideas that were brought to the Zambian culture by missionaries and colonialists. Although these two groups came to Zambia (Africa) at different times, the groups came with their own culture that also affected the Zambian people. Lynette Schumaker (1996: 240) for example explains:

Ruled by the British South African Company in the early years of the twentieth century, Northern Rhodesia gained an administrative and technological infrastructure built mainly to extract and export minerals and other products, including African labor for the more highly developed industrial areas in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. White settlers, both on farms and in the mining towns of the country's Copperbelt, brought with them distinctively southern African forms of segregation-master-servant relationships on farms and in the domestic sphere, and an industrial color bar and city-planning style that allotted racially defined groups to segregated areas and occupations. These relationships followed British colonial patterns established earlier in India, as well as British and Afrikaner patterns established in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia.

Moore and Vaughan (1994: 156) have argued that with Westernisation and modernisation, the result, among many other effects, was the “monetization of marriage payments”. Moore and Vaughan (1994: 157) have reviewed Richards’ sentiments on the monetization of marriage payments. Moore and Vaughan (1994:158) dispute Richards’ contention that monetization curtails social relations that were built when the couple worked together for marriage payments and the groom came to live with the bride’s family. Currently, grooms just pay lobola in money form when previously it was a bracelet that was given, for instance. Moore and Vaughan (1994: 159) explain that Richards’ view is that currently, after payment of lobola, couples leave and no longer live with their in-laws. However, Moore and Vaughan’s contention is that at the time that Richards carried out her fieldwork, the Bemba people were already using money in trade, therefore rendering Richards’ arguments invalid.

In her article, “Negotiating Marriage on the Eve of Human Rights”, Kirsten Besendahl (2004) discusses Malawian women negotiating marriage. Besendahl (2004: 1) asserts that:

In connection with marriage formation, important key actors are the ankhoswe. Ankhoswe are marriage counsellors, usually the couple's uncles, who are involved in contracting the marriage. In both patrilineal and matrilineal societies, a marriage is not considered valid unless the ankhoswe have been involved in the officiating of the marriage. Ankhoswe continue to play a potentially crucial role in a marriage as they also mediate between the spouses in the case of matrimonial disputes.

Besendahl (2004: 3) explains that women's lives mainly center round the home and they are dependent on their husbands for economic support because they do not have skills to work outside the home. However, in her editorial to the book *Gender, Development, and Marriage*, Caroline Sweetman (2003: 6) opposes this view stating, "In contrast, in the vast majority of cultures, women are stereotyped as homemakers even if they actually spend all day in the marketplace or field." This means that it is most often women who are categorised as not having skills to hold positions in the public domain or wage paying employment outside the home than men. This is why men are often in the public domain with wage paying employment while women are relegated to the domestic domain "raising children" and caring for the family.³⁰ Sweetman's (2003) point competes with Basendahl's (2004) point about women's life revolving around the home and does not necessarily mean that women have formal employment. Sweetman's view is that women are able to hold positions in the public domain if they are given that opportunity just as well as the men can.

Some of the literature from the anthropologists³¹ seems to show a longing for an unchanged *imbusa* teaching. My curiosity is whether the anthropologists' longing is for the same procedure regarding the performance of teaching, or whether they wish the content of *imbusa* to remain unchanged. Turner (1987: 57), for instance, laments that when she revisited the Ndembu people of North Western Zambia after thirty-one years, she found that the ritual of *Kankanga*, which is similar to *imbusa*, had been "greatly reduced and altered". Turner (1987: 57) stressed, "Ritual among the Ndembu of Zambia has changed drastically through time and shows no signs of stabilizing." Similarly, Haynes also observed that while the initiation process was similar to the one described by Richards, *banacimbusa* who are Christians were more open about issues in their speech than the obscure speech that Richards observed around the 1930s. My argument is that "open speech" has always been found among the Bemba in the space of *imbusa* teachings. Probably, with the

³⁰ See also Ria Smit (2011); Yusuf Sidani (2016).

³¹ Richards (1956) and (1982); Turner (1987); Haynes (2012) and (2013); .

Pentecostal *imbusa* teachings on the Copperbelt that Haynes witnessed, the women used fewer proverbs and just “called a spade a spade,” proverbs are part of the *imbusa* teachings. However, only a person who has undergone *imbusa* teachings would know the deeper meaning of a proverb. Therefore, straight talk in *imbusa* is part of the process. Moreover, a bride usually sits with *nasenge* who keeps interpreting these proverbs to her as *nacimbusa* and other women are teaching. There is a possibility that it is this straight speech in *imbusa* that may have caused the missionaries and colonial officials to assume that women in *imbusa* were foul mouthed. Haynes also states, “In part, the changes evident in Copperbelt *amafunde* suggest that the boundaries of secrecy that have traditionally protected certain kinds of relationships have been strengthened in the light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.” The change in the Copperbelt province was inevitable indeed, because Bemba had migrated from the rural areas to the city, hence the way the *imbusa* teachings were performed in the city became a bit different from how they were performed in the rural areas. This is in line with what African women scholars³² have argued – that culture is not static, it is fluid and changes constantly. African women theologians have called for aspects of culture that are life-giving to be embraced while life-denying aspects of culture be rejected. In this current study, the emphasis is on whether there is agency on the part of taught women or not, and whether or why women have to negotiate these teachings in the public sphere as well as in the private sphere.

2.3. Bemba Women’s Agency within Imbusa

Richards (1982) has classified Bemba women as women with sexual agency; Richards (1982) observed that the Tonga people referred to the Bemba women as being with *ichilumba chamunda* (stomach pride). This agency was attained from the instructions that women receive in *imbusa* teachings before their marriage. Rasing (2001: 57) has systematically outlined the agency of Bemba women through *imbusa* teachings. The *imbusa* space gives Bemba women instruction on how to live in society with their new status as married women, hence their conduct changes after *imbusa* teachings. People from different ethnic groups might perceive that agency as pride or arrogance. In this *imbusa* space of teaching, Rasing (2001: 48) illustrates how Bemba women are instructed on the rituals and concepts of blood, sex and fire. Chondoka (2001: 97) and Rasing (2001: 50) explain that

³² Oduyoye (1995); Phiri and Nadar (2006).

every couple is presented with a marriage pot (currently the couple is given a basin), which they use to purify themselves, especially after their first intercourse. This purification would allow the bride to touch the fire and cook for her husband, and other people as well.

A Bemba couple is expected to purify each other often especially if there has been infidelity. Only a legally married couple can perform this purification, and if there was infidelity by the wife for instance, she would not be allowed to touch the fire or cook for the family, as she would bring misfortune and sickness in the family (Richards 1982: 30; Rasing 2001). The mixing of blood and other bodily fluids with a third person in the marriage was believed to cause misfortune if the couple did not purify each other, according to Richards (1982: 31). This, I would argue, was the understanding previously/precolonially. However, with the impact of other cultures on the Bemba way of life, this ritual has been re-interpreted as 'hygiene' after a couple has intercourse. After the sexual act, the bride would clean her husband with warm water (in the given basin) and a towel. Richards (1982: 30) shed light on the fire, blood and sex, stating that if these three are "brought into wrongful contact of each other, they are thought to be highly dangerous to everyone especially babies and young children". This means that when the ritual of purification is not performed and the woman prepares food for the family, they may get diseases, especially children because they are vulnerable and fragile; it was believed that children may have *icifuba chantanda bwanga* (sickness of the chest) if the purification did not take place. Extramarital sex whether by the husband or wife is, therefore risky because the purification ritual can only be performed by a legally married³³ couple and is initiated by the wife, as Rasing (2001: 50) explained. All forms of sexual satisfaction out of wedlock are seen to be dangerous. Both Richards (1982: 35) and Rasing (2001: 50) observe that it was believed that extra marital affairs are risky especially when the wife is pregnant because if her husband has intercourse with another woman, the child may die during delivery. Rasing further explains that the risk is because illicit intercourse cannot be followed by the purification; that only legally married couples perform. Stillbirth is known as *incila* (exceeding or especially overstepping), *acila umukashi* meaning that he has over-stepped his wife. Such men were considered a danger to the well-being of the community and were punished severely. There is also an aspect of the wife

³³ While sex is encouraged in marriage, it is dangerous for those that are unmarried as they cannot purify themselves. Hence at *icisungu* puberty rite, Bemba girls were given teachings on how they have to guard their virginity. The Bemba people do not practice virginity tests like the Zulu and other African societies, they teach a girl and give her reasons why sex before marriage is problematic and leave her with the responsibility to guard her virginity herself.

committing adultery while pregnant. If a pregnant woman died during delivery or childbirth, she was perceived as having committed illicit intercourse; this is called *inbentu*. It is believed that the wife has taken the child's spirit (*asendo umupashi wa mwana*) (Richards 1956: 35; Rasing 2001: 50). However, there was room for remedy if the wife or husband confessed their acts before the birth of the child or before the wife went into labour. *Banacimbusa* knew the right medicine for this, as explained by Rasing (2001: 50). In this way, a Bemba woman was empowered to take charge in the marriage and initiate discussions with her spouse if she suspected infidelity. If she was not satisfied with the responses from her spouse, she had every right to take her spouse to *banacimbusa* for further talks, as Rasing (2001: 52) notes. All these were ways that *banacimbusa* taught Bemba women to be agents of their sexual lives within their marriages because the initiator of the purification rite was a woman. Rasing clarifies that "the woman was regarded as the main celebrant of marital life and held responsible for the proper performance of the rituals surrounding sexuality". In fact, the woman also had the right to refuse sexual relations with her husband if she suspected that he had extramarital sex (Rasing 2001: 52).³⁴ Rasing (2001: 51) rightly asserts, "As the wife is the responsible one in the act, it takes more time to teach her compared to the husband". For a Bemba woman to learn all these roles and responsibilities as an agent of her sexual life, she needed training from *banacimbusa*. This is in contrast to what current *imbusa* teachings offer; often brides are taught never to deny their spouses sex no matter what (Kaunda 2013: 43). The agency in this teaching is that a Bemba woman learns how, in an event that she is faced with calamity related to her husband's infidelity, she has rights to explain to the families (hers and his) of the circumstances that she has been living under. When a Bemba wife, for instance, has raised her suspicions of her husband and she feels that he is still not forthcoming with the truth, the matter is taken to her *nacimbusa* for more counsel.

Haynes' (2013) article "Change and *Chisungu* in Zambia's Time of AIDS" observes the "open talk"³⁵ among Christian Pentecostal women on Zambia's Copperbelt Province. Haynes (2013: 1) states, "This emphasis on direct or 'straight' speech stands in stark contrast to earlier accounts of female

³⁴ See also Hinfelaar (1989: 9); Labrecque (1931).

³⁵ In *imbusa* teachings, open talk has always existed; the secrecy is when women are outside of the *imbusa* teaching space and with unmarried people (what is learnt in the *imbusa* space is for married women only). Outside of the *imbusa* teaching space women still discuss certain aspects of the teachings, however they ought to be careful how much information they give others especially if it is about their marriage or husband.

initiation in Zambia, which highlight ‘obscure’ modes of communication.” The *imbusa* teaching space however, has been a space where women have expressed their freedom of speech, unless by “obscure communication”. Haynes refers to Bemba women’s communicating via symbolism, which an uninitiated woman such as herself may not fully understand until someone explains it to her. Symbolism had its place and still has its place within the space of *imbusa* teachings. In current teachings, women still draw *imbusa* patterns as well as mold some other forms of *imbusa* pottery as symbols of what a married woman should expect in marriage. Interpretation is given to the bride accordingly and every married woman that is present in the teaching knows what those drawings and pottery mean or symbolise. Haynes (2013: 2) has explored the social changes on the Copperbelt of Zambia that came because of AIDS. Her observation is that there are talks that are more open during *amafunde* than the previous secrecy that was shown in these rites. Haynes (2013: 2) has analysed Richard’s book as well as Rasing’s on *imbusa*. Then in comparison, she analysed her own data from *amafunde* she attended when a young bride was being taught in preparation for her marriage. Haynes (2013: 11) explains that *amafunde* can “be understood as setting a precedent for open communication within marriage”. Haynes has observed that a dimension of openness in marriage has been added to *amafunde*, though they still hold that there should be secrecy about their sex lives, which is also the case with the disclosure of one’s HIV status (see also Haynes 2012).

Karla Poewe (1981) in her book *Matrilineal Ideology: Male-Female Dynamics in Luapula, Zambia* has focused on the gender dynamics among the Bemba people of Luapula province in Zambia. Poewe (1981: v) deals with “aspects of kinship and relates these to the gender system and male-female interactions”. She further explains that the Luapulans follow a pattern that is different from the West. Women are dominant and independent as they own and control land. At marriage, a man leaves his family to join his wife on her land (Poewe 1981: 14). This book by Poewe, relates to the current study in that it has taken longer for Bemba women in the cities to own land compared to pre-colonial and colonial times when they owned land in their villages. This means that it has taken longer for Bemba women in the cities to become part of the wage-earning workforce, and now that they have “broken through that glass ceiling” as Parker (1996: 189) notes, they are confronted with new cultural challenges in their work places and homes. Being a matrilineal community, the Bemba people taught sexual agency to young brides during their initiation rite. In her article “Eroticism, Sensuality and ‘Women's Secrets’ among the Baganda: A Critical Analysis”, Sylvia Tamale (2005: 9)

“focuses on one particular cultural/sexual initiation institution among the Baganda of Uganda, namely the *Ssenga*”. The *Ssenga* (paternal aunt) is *nasenge* in Bemba and is central to a Bemba girl’s sexual instruction and upbringing. Women’s secrets among Baganda resonate with this study in that the theme deals with women’s marital sexual instruction, which among the Bemba, is also known as ‘women’s’ secrets.’ Specifically, Tamale (2005: 9) explains that “At the helm of this elaborate socio-cultural institution is the paternal aunt (or surrogate versions thereof), whose role it is to tutor young girls and women in a wide range of sexual matters, including pre-menarche practices, pre-marriage preparation, erotic instruction and reproduction.” This is exactly what goes on in the Bemba *imbusa* institution as a bride is being prepared for a life as a married woman. For the Bemba, the paternal aunt is there for moral support of her niece and though she is not the one who teaches and instructs her niece, she still plays a vital role in the upbringing of her niece/s and is the one responsible for educating her about *ukukuna* for instance. Despite the many similarities in the marital instructions between the Baganda and Bemba people, the “social structure of the Baganda has a strong patriarchal, patrilineal and polygynous base, with a well-entrenched patriclan system of organisation” as explained by Tamale (2005: 14), while the Bemba structure is matrilineal and placed women as priestesses and enablers of prayers. Being aware that the Baganda are patrilineal while the Bemba are matrilineal, I draw on the fact that in both cultures the paternal aunt is instrumental to the girls’ initiation rite.

While in the cultural sense, Bemba women had the status of “head of the home” (*Chibinda wa ng’anda*) (Hinfelaar 1994) and were taught agency in the *imbusa* space, currently, women are taught to submit to their husbands. This means they do not question the husband’s whereabouts for example, if he had not spent the night at home and was not at work (Kaunda 2013). Rasing (2010: 2) argues that women are currently taught not to question a husband about where he has been as soon as he comes home; rather she should wait and calm down before questioning him so that they do not get into a fight over this, in case there is a reasonable explanation. However, in the interviews for my Master’s research, women acknowledged being taught to never question their husband’s whereabouts nor deny them sex regardless of whether the wife was aware of her husband’s infidelity or not (Kaunda 2013: 41). Interestingly, Rasing (2001: 50) had years earlier noted that Bemba women were agents of their own sexuality as they would question a husband if they doubted their

husband's infidelity and would take him to a traditional court if they were not satisfied with his response before they would sexually satisfy him.

Women among the Bemba had been working in the fields prior to colonialism, however, with colonialism, only men were required in employment outside the home. The next section focuses on women and work. With formal employment of women on the increase in Zambia, women hold high positions in the public sphere and still hold marriage in high esteem.

2.4. Literature on Women and Work

Due to scarce literature on the Bemba women in the workplace, I draw on literature on women in various contexts. Amali Phillips (2003: 20) in her article "Rethinking Culture and Development: Marriage and Gender among the Tea Plantation Workers in Sri Lanka" has argued that "Marriage is the most auspicious rite of passage in the life of a Tamil woman worker in Sri Lanka's tea plantations. It supposedly confers on her the power to bring wealth, prosperity and health to her family, and to enhance the well-being of her husband." As among the Bemba, Phillips (2003: 27) argues that marriage practices among the Tamil in Sri Lanka socialize women and girls to accept social and gender inequalities. Phillips underlines that cultural practices among the Tamil have infiltrated their workplace, and continue to perpetuate gender inequalities for Tamil women. My own study sought to unravel whether *imbusa* teachings have intertwined with the workplace and continue to perpetuate inequalities for the Bemba career women in their places of work. This study also sought to uncover how Bemba married women negotiate and navigate around these *imbusa* teachings in their homes and workplaces.

Evelyn Chiloane-Tsoka (2012) in her article "Cultural Observations facing Women Managers: A South African Perspective" discusses how culture puts constraints on women managers in their place of work in South Africa. Tsoka-Chiloane (2012: 4953) argues that South African management positions have no female mentors and women end up looking up to their male counterparts for mentorship. Due to the cultural norms that socialize South African women to be respectful to men, they fail to carry out certain duties and leave those for the men to do. This, Tsoka-Chiloane (2012: 4952) argues, "...enforces the male manager stereotype and confirms the negative female

stereotype”. These are some of the issues that this study explored in investigating how Bemba women use what they have been taught in their cultural *imbusa* teachings in the public sphere of work. Tsoka-Chiloane (2012) argues that the socialization of South African black women to put men on a pedestal leaves them in a conflicted state when it comes to handling men at work places.

Ousseina Alidou 2005 has written on Muslim women’s agency in her book *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger*.³⁶ Alidou (2005: 3) explains that the book “explores the interplay between Muslim women and agency in the Republic of Niger as shaped by religion, ethnicity, class, schooling, and citizenship.” Alidou examines the four domains “political Islam, education, popular culture, and war” that have until recently been dominated by men, and are now domains in which Muslim women have begun to inscribe their agency. Alidou shows how Muslim women have begun to be agents of their own empowerment in Niger using the very tools that were initially meant for their subjugation. Alidou focuses on three Muslim women who are Qur’anic teachers in Mosques. Exploring *madarasa* or *makaranta* (Qur’anic schools run by women), Alidou argues that “The *madarasa* has become a space that Nigerian women in urban centers are appropriating not only to advance their understanding of Islam for religious purposes, but more importantly to create a new female space for generating economic revenue and female solidarity”. Similarly, in this study, I sought to explore whether and how the *imbusa* space is a women’s space that promotes and stimulates gender equality and empowerment for Bemba women in Zambia.

Ria Smit (2011) in her article “Family-Related Policies in Southern African Countries: Are Working Parents Reaping Any Benefits?” grapples with how the SADC region formulates policies that are relevant and friendly to working parents. This article has focused on working parents; however, the issue of working women negotiating family life and work is more pronounced than for men because it is a “given” that men should be breadwinners and provide for their family. This is what my study focuses on as well; Bemba married career women negotiating cultural instructions at work and at home. Smit (2011: 16) notes, “In sub-Saharan Africa, the reality of trying to reconcile work and family is not foreign to women”. Women negotiate more than men when it comes to family and work, and they usually are the ones to give up work in order to take care of

³⁶ See also Saba Mahmood (2005) *Politics of Piety*.

family. Further, Smit (2011: 17-19) demonstrates how paternity leave is shorter and remunerated more than maternity leave. Maternity leave is longer and remuneration is less.

Yusuf Sidani (2016), in his handbook chapter “Working Women in Arab Countries: A Case for Cautious Optimism,” explores the position of employed women in the Middle East. He critically looks at two groups of women; one group believes that there is nothing wrong in the work place as what the women in the Middle East experience is similar to what women elsewhere experience. The second group believes that everything is wrong for women in the work place because there is more gender inequality and discrimination against working women in the Middle East than elsewhere (2016: 689). Like the Bemba women of Zambia, Sidani (2016: 691) notes that wage-paying work outside the home for Arab women in the Middle East is recent, despite the fact that women have been working in agriculture and traditional crafts. Further, Sidani (2016: 693) reveals, “Like their counterparts in other parts of the world, married working women in Arab societies face more tensions in their families as they try to balance their work and family lives.” The domestic home chores among Arab women, like among the Bemba women, rests more on the shoulders of women, despite both spouses being in employment outside the home. At work, Arab women face diverse kinds of challenges; like Bemba women, some of the “...pressures pertain to perceptions of her being a woman, not fit for leadership roles, and not being equipped with what it takes to succeed in a world that is ‘not hers’” as argued by Sidani (2016: 694).

Louise North (n.d.: 264), in her chapter “Women’s Struggle for Top Jobs in the News Media”, reviewed “Six Australian news companies – two newspapers, two television stations and two radio stations” and shows the experiences of women in media in Australia. North observed that “Women dominate in only one occupational category in Australian newsrooms surveyed: support roles associated with sales, finance and administration” while they are less in senior management positions that are associated with roles such as senior writers, executive editors and news directors, etc. North also notes, “...women earn 2.5 per cent less than men in the fifteen to twenty-four-year age group”. According to North these media companies have argued that “women earn less because they take time out of work to raise children and then return to work part-time or to less senior roles – but these statistics are for female journalists without children working full-time, suggesting this common

presumption is misguided.” This study sought to find out whether this is the case with Bemba career women as well.

In the article “Career and Life-Balance of Professional Women: A South African Study”, Thana Whitehead and Me Kotze (2003: 77) noted that the way a professional woman manages and balances numerous “life-roles is directly related to her physical and mental well-being, and her career performance and success”. Work and family are two important life-roles to most adults not only women, and if “conflicts between these two domains occur, there are potentially adverse effects for individuals, families and organisations” (Whitehead and Kotze, 2003: 77). It has been noted that professional women are “faced with a unique challenge to balance the competing expectations of work and home, along with all their other roles” (Whitehead and Kotze, 2003: 78). This, for Bemba women, means that the conflict is how to live out what they were taught in *imbusa* and in formal academic education. Negotiating both spheres as well as other spheres that they are a part of is necessary to Bemba women if they are to balance their roles. Whitehead and Kotze (2003: 79) reveal that, “evidence exists that women still carry the primary responsibility for family and household activities.” This means that women carry the load of the family responsibilities as well as their careers.

Susan Whiston et al (2015) in their article “Older Professional Women’s Views on Work: A Qualitative Analysis” carried out research on 13 older women aged 50 and above “regarding the influences of gender and age on work” (Whiston et al 2015: 80). The findings of Whiston et al’s (2003) study were that being a woman in the work place has both advantages and disadvantages in various work domains. In some instances, being a woman in a work place becomes advantageous while at other times, no matter how much women try to put in extra effort, they are never treated equally.

Often women have to work twice as hard as men do in order to earn the respect in the work place that a man earns without even trying. Similarly, in this study, I sought to ascertain whether and how Bemba women in public or social spaces are treated unequally because of gender. Literature shows that women are often associated with the domestic sphere more than the public sphere. Remarkably, women have demonstrated that they are able to hold both spheres in balance more than men are

and are resilient in their work places despite the main obstacles that threaten to have them confined to the private sphere and leave the public sphere for men.

2.5. Literature on Women and Family/Marriage

In her article “Rural Black Women’s Agency within Intimate Partnerships amid the South African HIV Epidemic”, Britta Thege (2009: 457) explains that:

While in the West the cultural concept of repression has had a negative effect on female sexual autonomy (Hite, 1976), a similar effect arises from the African concept of respect. One facet of this respect, especially in rural areas, is the respect women owe to men.

This is true for many African countries; it is also true among the Bemba people of Zambia. In fact, respect for the men (especially the husband) is one of the components of the *imbusa* teachings to un/educated women. Thege (2009: 457) has used radical feminist theory (modern feminist thought in particular) “to account for unequal gender dynamics in the private domain, as a rather neglected area of South Africa’s gender-transformative policies, with its prevalent liberal paradigm and focus on the public sphere.” This means that while it is important to look at the public spheres, it is of great importance to look at how women live in the private sphere as well. Thege (2009: 457) explains:

... good conduct in a woman is related to her submissive attitude towards her husband and embodied in such practices as showing respect to him, obeying his rules, not questioning his behaviour, doing the household chores and taking care of the children. Furthermore, wives are socialised to stay in the marriage and to endure all hardships... Additionally, marriage is identified as very important for a woman in terms of gaining social respect.

This is what a Bemba woman (educated or not) is taught in *imbusa* as well. While Thege’s research is based on rural women in South Africa, the teachings that they hold are similar to what Bemba and Zambian women receive at their initiation rite (both in the rural areas and cities).

In the article “Married Clergy Women: How They Maintain Traditional Marriage Even as they Claim New Authority”, Susan Cody-Rydzewsk (2007: 276) explains that “In most cases, evangelical women acknowledge both the ideal of the homemaking role for women and the need for most wives to

work. These women may define homemaking as the norm for wives and paid work as the undesirable exception". Rydzewsk (2007: 277) notes "...clergy women experience tension between their careers and their family obligations... However, research on employed wives reveals that, even when employed full-time, women generally carry the burden for domestic work and emotional support." This study set out to empirically research how Bemba career women negotiate *amafunde yambusa* in their homes as well as their workplace because in *imbusa* women are taught to carry the burden of family and domestic work, as Rydzewsk notes of women in the USA. Career women, whether Bemba or not, have "climbed concrete walls" to find space in the public sphere yet often they are referred back to the private/domestic sphere. In fact, Rydzewsk (2007: 277) notes that compared to religious wives (women married to clergy); "religious husbands may distance themselves from domestic responsibilities to reaffirm their masculinity and position as spiritual head of household." This strengthens the argument raised earlier that women still hold the domestic responsibilities despite working the same hours and probably the same careers. In fact, these are some of the issues that this study set out to uncover among Bemba women who have undergone teachings that reinforce such socialisation.

In their article "Work–Family Interface for Married Women: a Singapore and United States Cross-Cultural Comparison", Tamara Fackrell, Adam M. Galovan, Jeffrey Hill and Erin Kramer Holmes (2013: 347) have demonstrated "how the direction and strength of paths in a model of the work–family interface differs between a collectivist nation (Singapore) and an individualistic nation (the USA)." Fackrell et al (2013: 348) uncovered that married women's experiences differ from men's at their workplace. Some "...potential differences between genders in the workplace include women's higher work-family distress, lower mental and physical well-being and role strain" (Fackrell et al 2013: 347). In both nations, depression, job satisfaction as well as family income affected married women in some similar and some different ways.

In her article "Gender and Family Ideals: An Exploratory Study of Black Middle-Class Americans", Faustina Haynes (2000) explores black male and female interpersonal dynamics. Haynes (2000: 818) found from his empirical research that both black men and women (middle-class) have expectations that are neo-patriarchal, in that both genders acknowledged expectancy of the man to be the main breadwinner of the family. In fact, from her research she met with sentiments that described women

as nurturers and men as providers. Such are sentiments that one finds even in the place of work; women are often given lower salaries than men are, even when they may have the same qualifications and job position, because a man has to provide for his family. Similarly, concerning household chores, Haynes (2000: 821) noted that both women and men had neo-patriarchal views, though they also felt that earning more than a spouse should not be the reason for someone to have a final say in decision-making of the home. With the Bemba women who are taught that a man is a provider and final say in decision-making, how as educated career women do they navigated such teachings in their homes? Has attaining university/college education and becoming career women helped Bemba women in the way that they negotiate and navigate *amafunde yambusa*?

The literature above shows that while research has been done on initiation rites, specifically *icisungu* and *imbusa*, in the Zambian context, there still exists a gap of understanding about how *imbusa* rites are engaged with by “contemporary” educated career women in their everyday life. Most of the literature reviewed centers on cultural rites of rural, Christian and urban women; however, this study sought to understand how urban, married, career women navigate and negotiate with the *amafunde yambusa* at home and at work. For married Bemba women who have been taught the prescribed ways of behavior, can they still be agents in their homes and workplace? How do Bemba women live out the *imbusa* teachings in their private/domestic domain as well as in public social spheres? There is much literature that has been written on women’s agency, and in this study, I intentionally sought Bemba married career women’s agency in particular. While there is literature on Bemba women’s power in pre-colonial Zambia, there is little literature on the implications of that power in contemporary Zambia. How can this power be translated and used in giving women space in the corporate public space rather than relegating them to a private sphere when they are capable of decision-making just as well as men?

Educating a young married woman in the ways of Bemba tradition is crucial in Bemba cosmology as a way of reclaiming women’s agency and giving such a woman the secret/s to marital longevity. Anthropologists have researched the *ichisungu* initiation rite of the Bemba and other African people, which contains *amafunde yambusa* for the Bemba. Currently, Zambians who have written on such teachings have desired transformation that would allow women to obtain a formal education as well

as these *amafunde* (Mushibwe 2009). In this study however, I demonstrated how Bemba career women live out these teachings.

Research on *imbusa* has primarily studied the content and the performance of the teaching (Richards 1982; Corbeil 1982; Chondoka 2001; Lumbwe 2004 and 2009). Pioneers of research on *imbusa* include Western anthropologists and missionaries such as Richards and Rev Corbeil, whose focus was the performance of the rite and archival purposes, respectively. Darlene Rude (1999) as well as Rasing (1995) and Chondoka (2001) have focused on initiation rites and their relevance in the current Zambia. Currently various Zambians (Mushibwe 2009; Lumbwe 2004 and 2009; Chondoka 2001; Kaunda 2013 and 2016) have taken an interest in research on *imbusa*. I however, have paid particular attentions to the impact *imbusa* has on women and their experiences after they have undergone the teachings (Kaunda 2013 and 2016) using feminist cultural hermeneutics and psycho-socio analyses. The methods scholars have utilized to research *imbusa* have been mostly ethnography by white anthropologists. In his article, “Theological Interest in AICs and other grassroots communities in South Africa,” Tinyinko Maluleke draws attention to the fact that whites have undertaken most of the research in Africa. He (1996:43) feels;

This is the reason why White researchers have self-consciously had to deal with the question: what am I, as a White person, [representative of colonialism and imperialism], doing amongst Black people? What right do I have to be here? Will I cope with being here? Will I understand what happens here?

However, Maluleke “concedes that a lifelong commitment to the people and the culture studied might mitigate the disadvantage and the impertinence, with which the White researcher embarks on such a project” (Garner 2004:63) However, he thinks few have managed to demonstrate such a genuine commitment. This is not meant to despise the contributions of outsiders, who have made such significant contribution understanding how such ritual as *imbusa* have evolved over time, but to affirm that writing is a significant tool through which people represent themselves. By representing themselves, Bemba women contribute to the discursive construction of emancipatory space and become agents of their own stories and history. Currently, there are Zambian women scholars researching on *imbusa* (like Mushibwe 2009; Siwila 2011; Kaunda 2013) using interviews and participant observation. I drew on these studies and others to demonstrate the agency of Bemba women in *imbusa* teachings. To this end, I used feminist interviewing in order to produce relevant

data as well as let the participants decide on a number of aspects pertaining to the interviews, such as when, where and how the interview took place. I used nego-feminism, a postcolonial theory, as a lens through which to view Bemba women's negotiation of *imbusa* in their homes and their work places. For my Master's research, I used feminist narrative interviewing in order to let the participants tell their own stories of the initiation rite.

In this study, the intention was to find out how the *imbusa* teachings prepared Bemba women for the public sphere of waged employment. With monetization of many aspects of people's lives, women have also sought wage-paying employment outside their homes and this study has intentionally focused on Bemba married career women and their experiences in homes and workplaces.

Reviewed literature revealed that *imbusa* teachings have been tainted with Westernization and hence are alleged to have contributed to the changes that are currently experienced in marriage in the Copperbelt province. This study sought to "dig a little deeper" and reveal Bemba women's lived experiences of *imbusa* teachings in their homes and work places. How have these teachings affected their experiences? This study sought to reveal whether Bemba women experience the work place differently due to the teachings they have received. Previous studies have tended to focus on *imbusa* as a rite that is performed on rural uneducated women, except for Rasing (2004), Haynes (2013), Lumbwe (2009) and Kaunda (2013) who have focused on *imbusa* in the cities. I have intentionally focused not only on *imbusa* in relation to women in the city but educated women living in cities. I explore how Bemba women negotiate and navigate their traditional 'curriculum' in order to benefit from both the home and work.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has engaged with literature that links with *imbusa* initiation rites and women in the corporate public sphere. Anthropologists have had an interest in the *imbusa* initiation rite since the

colonial period³⁷ and were the first to write on the rite. Since much of what was initially written on *imbusa* was by anthropologists and missionaries, their early works are used extensively in this study.

This chapter reviewed literature on women and work generally. The next chapter discusses the framework that was utilized in this study.

³⁷ This is not to imply that the missionaries, anthropologists and colonialists came to Zambia (Africa) at the same time with the same intent. For detailed discussions on the history of the missionaries, anthropologists' arrival in Africa and colonialists see Rasing 2001 Hifelaar 1994.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMING

POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST THEORISING: INDIGENOUS RUPTURES, AGENCY AND STRUGGLE FOR DE-PATRIARCHALIZATION OF *IMBUSA*

Postcolonialism can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and crucially, interrogating the colonial past – Leela Gandhi (1998:4).

3.0. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the literature concerning women, career and initiation rites. This chapter seeks to examine whether and how meanings and conceptions of *amafunde yambusa* may have evolved during and after the colonial period through the *imbusa*³⁸ teachings of Bemba women. The question this chapter seeks to answer is: what theoretical lenses are most appropriate for an understanding of contemporary *imbusa*? Furthermore, how has knowledge about traditional *imbusa* been produced, and how can new knowledge about traditional *imbusa* be produced? According to Valentin Mudimbe (1988: x), “discourses have not only socio-historical origins but also epistemological contexts”. Epistemology is a theory of knowledge that investigates the origin, nature, methods, validity, and scope, distinguishing between facts and opinions and the limits of human knowledge (Thayer-Bacon 2003). It is the starting point on which theoretical assumptions are constructed. Colonial anthropology was a system of political, economic, religious and cultural domination and subjugation, as Burouway (2010)³⁹ has asserted. The colonial power relations that informed anthropological methods of interpretation of indigenous discourses were deliberate means for disempowering the subjugated by reinventing their discourses (Deloria 1969).⁴⁰ Kevin Maxwell (1983: 158) demonstrates how the missionaries, for proselyte purposes, recreated the key concept of *imbusa* – *Lesa* – stripping it of its feminine characteristics and redefining it in the likeness of the

³⁸ While there are other ethnic groups in Zambia that have begun to use the notion of *imbusa* to refer to their premarital teachings, the notion is borrowed from the Bemba people of the Northern part of Zambia.

³⁹ See also Alut (1983); Lewis (2010).

⁴⁰ See for instance, p'Bitek (1970), Ranger (1983, 1989), Pels (1997).

Judeo-Christian patriarchal God. It can be argued that the indigenous discourse⁴¹ of *imbusa* was radically altered through its reinterpretation, redefinition and representation through Western frameworks. Rasing (2001:190) shows that the missionaries:

...tried to baptize local people and spread the gospel and they also taught mores that were common in Europe at the time. They wanted to imprint these values on the local people and to abolish indigenous customs and rituals that they considered pagan and immoral.

Furthermore, it can be argued that *imbusa* teachings have been interpreted through colonial lenses that perceived Bemba (and other African) thought as disinteresting and pre-scientific.⁴² Similarly, Rasing demonstrates how the missionaries' attitudes toward the local people changed negatively around the 1920s. Rasing (2001: 195) explains:

The people were to be Christianized and civilized, which meant that they should adopt a Western way of life. As part of the conversion process, they were forced to give up a wide range of traditional cultural practices, including initiation rites for girls, divination and the honoring of ancestors.

The colonial thought relegated traditional African thought "to the bottom rung on a metamorphic ladder of human development" (Hodge 1971-1972: 92).⁴³ Further, dichotomies have often been used to conceptualize the difference between Europe and Africa; "scientific and traditional religious thought; intellectual versus emotional; rational versus mystical; reality-oriented versus fantasy-oriented; causally oriented versus supernaturally oriented; empirical versus non-empirical; abstract versus concrete; analytical versus non-analytical" (Horton 1969: 69). Traditional African thought was never analyzed as a distinctive thought system in its own right but as the antithesis of colonial thought. Many scholars and specialists of African affairs, cultures and languages have argued that both the missionaries and colonial officials came to Christianize and civilize Africans and it was imperative that Africans convert to Christianity, reject their beliefs and rites as 'primitive', 'pagan'

⁴¹ Discourse in this chapter is used to refer to communication of thoughts and ideas used in *imbusa* that have led to the beliefs, values and views that Bemba people hold concerning marriage.

⁴² Evans-Pritchard et al. (1954), Lévi-Strauss (1978).

⁴³ See also Bediako (1995).

and ‘demonic’.⁴⁴ In the same vein, Rasing (2001:190) asserts, “when the first missionaries arrived, their aim was to Christianize and civilize the African people.” Rasing (2001:191) further points out how the Catholic term “enculturation,” “refers to the adoption of the Christian message in a certain culture... in fact, it is a means of facilitating the adoption of the Christian faith and of gaining access to, and a control of, culture in order to use or alter them.” Rasing has clarified that the missionaries held negative views regarding various rituals of the indigenous Zambians. Rasing (2001: 197) succinctly states “Moreover, all the sacred rituals that favored proper access to the ancestors, such as the ritual of name-giving were condemned as pagan practice (*fya cisenshi*), evil (*fibi*) or irrelevant (*fya fye fye*).”⁴⁵

Within postcolonial thinking, this chapter problematizes *imbusa* ‘as a significant site of the struggle’ Bagele Chilisa (2012: 8) for decolonization of Zambian women’s agency⁴⁶ and de-patriarchalization⁴⁷ of society. I investigate whether *amafunde yambusa*, the ideology and philosophy that undergird the Bemba kinship, social and moral system, have returned to the pre-colonial matricentric⁴⁸ values and ideals that qualified it as *imbusa* to begin with. How has the change/non-change in the precolonial matricentric, ideological philosophy influenced the agency of married career women at work and in their homes and society at large? To what lengths did the colonial officials go to suppress women so that the Bemba men would work on the mines “effectively”? The chiefs were imposing penalties on Bemba women who tried to migrate to the Copperbelt because the chiefs believed that the women would slacken in their duties as married women as noted by Ault (1983: 183). In order to respond to these questions, I enter into dialogue with some postcolonial indigenous thinkers.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ See for instance Amadiume (1997, 2002), Oyewumi (1997, 2011), Bediako (1995), Phiri (1997), Oduyoye (2002), Mugambi (2002), Magesa (1997), Kaunda (2010).

⁴⁵ Rasing gives a detailed history of the missionaries and their interactions with the women in Zambia, for further readings on the missionaries’ history and the changes that their societies underwent, see Rasing (2001:189-217).

⁴⁶ Unless otherwise specified, agency in this chapter refers to Bemba women’s action in establishing values that solidify women’s experiences in marriage.

⁴⁷ De-patriarchalisation is used here as changing from the glorification of the man in the *imbusa* teachings to balancing the teaching between women and men.

⁴⁸ Values that are centred around and incline toward women and promote the status of women in community (see Poewe 1981).

⁴⁹ For detailed discussions on postcolonialism see the following: Fanon (1963, 1967), Memmi (1965), Thiong’o (1988), Torgovnick (1990), Wiredu (1995), Kang (2010), Oyewumi (1997, 2011), Amadiume (1997, 2002a), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a, 2013b).

I used some of the central insights of postcolonial indigenous theories to problematize and extend the emancipatory possibilities of indigenous knowledge that have emerged from African feminist discourse. Thereafter, I defined the central theoretical categories I engaged with in examining the notions of *imbusa* as a form of indigenous knowledge.

3.1. The Coloniality of Imbusa Discourse

In traditional Bemba thought, the notion of *imbusa* provided a matricentric⁵⁰ ideological basis on which religion, relation, economics, and politics rested (Poewe 1981: 10-11).⁵¹ The *imbusa* space was a political location within which Bemba women constructed and reconstructed their agency, according to Poewe (1981: 11). Within the *imbusa* pedagogy, collective memory, shared values and identities were interconnected. This was a site where women engaged in religio-political practices of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing their subjectivity and community. *Imbusa* can be perceived as a female-shared secret in which men were and are excluded; it was intentionally⁵² designed to strengthen matricentric solidarity among Bemba women. It was about transformation of females molded⁵³ into socially responsible women or, to make them *banamayo* (motherhood) women, responsible enough to make a home and society, writes Audrey Richard (1982 [1956]: 121). In Bemba belief, motherhood is not based on bearing biological children, although that can be considered an aspect of *banamayo* (motherhood). Rather, motherhood was an inclusive concept because even unmarried young women, as long as they have gone through *imbusa*, were regarded as mother. Motherhood was expressed concretely, metaphorically and symbolically in reference to the female's creative power as the owner of the home, the intercessors for social wholeness and procreation (human continuity), and the guardians in divine mysteries -priests of the home shrine (Hinfelaar 1994 and Kaunda 2010). When a Bemba girl reached puberty, her father referred to her as *mayo* (mother). This was a form of respect that a woman received.

⁵⁰ Matricentric means centering on the mother.

⁵¹ See also Hinfelaar (1994) and Cutrufelli (1983).

⁵² Intentionally because *imbusa* is a space where women empowered each other and shared secrets to long lasting marriages and stood in solidarity with younger women and all married and yet to be married women; sharing ideas and secrets on keeping their marriages in harmony.

⁵³ The process of sharing secrets to long lasting marriages is a moulding or shaping of women (moulding and shaping of women is not always negative); just as one becomes a feminist scholar through the moulding/shaping by other feminist scholars who are predecessors in feminist scholarship for example.

In her research on *Chisungu*, Richards (1982) established how girls passed from socialization into a sorority of women. The knowledge taught was the whole body of Bemba traditional knowledge. *Imbusa* teaching in precolonial Zambia had women learn, and understand, Bemba religion and politics (Hinfelaar 1994 and Poewe 1981). *Imbusa* inscribed the authority of age, female solidarity, and women's power over reproduction, knowledge production and political involvement. The women in matrilineal society of Luapula province were very much involved in the political economy and political organization, decision making and leadership of society as noted by Poewe (1981: 10-11). Through *imbusa*, women were able to generate a culture, the world in which women could resist any hostile discourse (Amadiume 2002b: 45). Indeed, *imbusa* for Bemba women “opened a gate of knowledge into this women's world”. The Nigerian poet, anthropologist and essayist, Ifi Amadiume (2002b: 45-46) in her article, “Bodies, Choices, Globalizing Neocolonial Enchantments”, examines Richards’ study on *Chisungu* and argues that:

Although Richards does not use the term gender, the data suggests that the political system is dual-gendered, and presents again a matriarchal umbrella... In the Chisungu ceremony the bridegroom, shibwinga, is an example of gender flexibility, for this term was also used for the sister or cross-cousin who could replace the bridegroom in aspects of the ceremony.

Motherhood-focused, matricentric homes and political leadership underpinned the Bemba ontologies, which represented the moral kinship ideology of motherhood as the basis of the Bemba thought, a point also noted by Poewe (1981: 11). The women in the Bemba system were believed to be the medium through whom *Lesa* (God), the ancestor par excellence of all ancestors who enshrines and instituted “matriarchitarianism” (Amadiume 2002) and from whom all traditions of equality, dignity and life flow to and through, the women unto the entire community (Maxwell 1983, Hinfelaar 1994). Hence, in critical matters concerning social wholeness and politics, the voice of the women was final. (Matriarchitarianism captures in this chapter the inclusive nature of the culture that Bemba women established in which both women and men had equal access to institutions within their community. Matriachitarianism is Amadiume’s (2002: 45) concept, which means “normative matriarchal orientation”). Hinfelaar (1994), in his book *Bemba Women and Religious Change*, noted that during the pre-colonial period, Bemba women exerted powers in the religious, social, political and economic structures. These cultural values were eroded during the colonial period through the missionaries who believed that Bemba thought was still primitive and not fully

developed (Maxwell 1983). A number of studies on matriarchy have rejected that such a system ever existed in Africa, arguing that it is a myth (Bamberger 1974).⁵⁴ This, it can be argued, stems from the fact that scholars like Tarikhu Farrar (1997) have defined the concept from an entrenched andro-Eurocentric⁵⁵ bias grounded in a belief that there are few good things that can come from Africa. In Bemba thought, matriarchy was not the antithesis of patriarchy as a system based on the oppression of the opposite sex. Matriarchy was based on both women and men sharing responsibilities equally without one gender being superior or inferior to the other. In her book, *Reinventing Africa*, Amadiume (2001: 196) demonstrates why African matriarchy cannot be defined as the opposite of patriarchy: “It is not the direct opposite of patriarchy, or an equivalent to patriarchy, as it is not based on appropriation and violence. The culture and rites of matriarchy did not celebrate violence; rather, they had a lot to do with fecundity, exchange and redistribution.” Richards (1982: 30) assumed that the *imbusa* would “die out” under enforced colonial modernity. The fact is that *imbusa* has not died out because of the resilience of Bemba people in keeping culture. However, the continued teaching does not mean that *imbusa* has not been altered in various aspects due to its encounter with different cultures. In her article, “The Changing Life of Ritual,” Edith Turner (1987: 62) did follow up research ten years after her previous study on the Ndembu of Zambia who also practices the girl’s initiation rite similar to the Bemba *Chisungu*. She lamented that:

I found that Christianity and nationalist modernization had been devouring the ancient culture like a plague – a plague full of the best intentions but in fact the agent of tragic destruction. My original story was no longer true. For ten years, there had been no spirit dancer, no spirit children beads; girls' initiation had been seriously reduced and had lost its major symbolism. Under attacks from the missions and the rationalist government school system ... Scant forethought was being given during girlhood to the approaching event of initiation.

At the core of such disintegration is a colonial and missionary enterprise that was suspicious of the secret nature of *imbusa* and gradually began challenging the rite as a pagan practice that needed to be reinterpreted in line with biblical teachings on marriage. As Grosfoguel (2008: 7) writes, “European

⁵⁴ See Goldberg (1993), Davis (1998), Eller (2000).

⁵⁵ In this study, I have differentiated between colonialist discourse and Eurocentric (or Euro-Western-centric) discourse. Although these discourses are intertwined, they have distinctive emphasis. Colonialist discourse is an explicit justification of colonialist and imperialist practices. Whereas, Eurocentric discourse “embeds, takes for granted, and ‘normalizes’ the hierarchical power relations generated by colonialism and imperialism, without necessarily even thematizing those issues directly” (Shohat and Stam 1995: 2).

patriarchy and European notions of sexuality, epistemology and spirituality were exported to the rest of the world through colonial expansion as the hegemonic criteria to racialize, classify and pathologize the rest of the world's population in a hierarchy of superior and inferior races.” The concept of patriarchy intersected with European theoretical and philosophical conceptualizations of Christianity, sexuality and knowledge production. The European mission came with a developed philosophical, religious and legal knowledge that not only justified the colonial domination but also domination of African women. Thus, *imbusa* was attacked, stripped of its ideological underpinnings of female agency and colonized (Kapwepwe 1994).⁵⁶ In her article, “Sheroes and Villains”, Amina Mama (1997: 47) reminds us that:

Being conquered by the colonizing powers; being culturally and materially subjected to a nineteenth-century European racial hierarchy and its gender politics; being indoctrinated into all-male European administrative systems, and the insidious paternalism of the new religious and educational systems ... has persistently affected all aspects of social, cultural, political, and economic life in postcolonial African states.

Colonial officials went to great lengths in order to keep women from the mining towns so that the Bemba men would work on the mines “effectively”. Could this mean that the contemporary *imbusa* practices have been transformed ideologically and politically, and are interpreted within the material legacies of colonialism and missionary patriarchal discourse? Could this then mean that Bemba women no longer exercise their agency? Since *imbusa* has been in contact with colonial and missionaries’ culture, do Bemba women exercise agency to resist colonial modernity and its matrix of power within Bemba society and Zambia at large? What is the possibility for Bemba women to reject new forms of oppression and exploitation of other women if they perpetuate notions of male headship and uncritical submission of women to male authority that were inherited from the colonial past? I argued this point in my Master’s thesis (Kaunda 2013: 42). However, I still raise this question since my position and conclusions have developed since I employed a decolonial feminist approach to *imbusa* teachings as an insider, a Bemba woman who has undergone the same teaching. The contact with missionary and colonial officials’ culture, as well as cultures from other ethnic groups, filtered into *imbusa* space. Along with that infiltration, aspects of *imbusa* were altered, including headship in the home.

⁵⁶ See also Hinfelaar (1994), Poewe (1981), Cutrufelli (1983).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1986) classic book, *Decolonizing the Mind*, engages with the idea that meaning is historically and socially constructed in furthering debates concerning language in African literature. The social-historical construction in this study suggests that meaning within African worlds was and is, produced and was written and is, being rewritten within the ideological material legacies of imperialism and colonialism (Giroux 2005: 11). In Bemba thought, it was through rites such as *imbusa* that a social and political⁵⁷ journey of the people was shaped and reshaped, constructed and deconstructed and reconstructed. It was through rites such as *imbusa* that collective political memory and social organization were reinvented. It was central not only in the production of social meaning (Hinfelaar 1994) and women's agency (Kaunda 2012), but also a constitutive condition for collective Bemba subjectivity. *Imbusa* was relational "matriarchitarianism" (Amadiume 2002b), a Bemba celebration of womanhood and womanhood-generated inclusive culture that was passed orally from generation to generation, as a Bemba charter myth (Maxwell 1983: 59).⁵⁸

In Bemba matriarchal thought, women and men did not dominate, oppress or exploit each other, they worked together on an equal basis. It was an inclusive matriarchitarianism, noted Poewe (1982: v) in her research among the Luapulans. She concluded, "Universal male dominance is an ethnographic illusion." She discovered that the matriarchal worldview favoured the "personal and social power of women." Further, she discovered that there were cross-gender roles without any indication of sexual components of the role. Poewe (1981: v) argued that the "dual sexuality" which must be correctly understood as "sexual transcendent roles" "refers to the fact that a person who is anatomically male, can play a female role." For example, a person's maternal uncle, specifically his/her maternal uncle, is *na-lume* or *noko-lume*. "Na" is a feminine prefix and "*noko*" means 'mother of'. The *lume* in both words refers to masculine gender. The accurate translation of both terms means 'male-mother' or more accurately the mother who is a male. This means, in Bemba political ideology, that responsibilities were not fixed but flexible and fluid, as both men and women worked together in public and private spheres (Poewe 1981). This made it easy for men and women to be

⁵⁷ This means that the social lives and political lives of the Bemba were taking their turn to replicate the colonialists' culture.

⁵⁸ Maxwell explains that the Bemba charter myth is "an event, or a performance narrative" (Maxwell 1983: 59).

treated with a level of equality, manage resources and make decisions in equality (Poewe 1981, Kapwepwe 1994, Hinfelaar 1994).

The central influence of Bemba women was based on cosmological wholeness in which women were seen to be the key to life, social wholeness and harmony. Women were greatly involved in religio-cultural and socio-political affairs among the Bemba people, stemming from the belief in *Lesa* who had entrusted them with divine creative powers for procreation and social prosperity in all sectors of life (Poewe 1981, Kapwepwe 1994, Hinfelaar 1994, Kaunda 2010). Hence, within the Bemba tradition, only the woman went through the rite of passage into womanhood and, as such, she was the bearer and the guardian of the ancient knowledge which she was obliged to teach the husband (Kaunda 2010: 10). The colonialists and missionaries were not only colonizing the nation of Zambia, they colonized *imbusa* as well (Corbeil 1982: 6) such that the white fathers wanted to know and witness the *imbusa* rite in order to know how to teach the Bemba about marriage. The colonization of *imbusa* contributed to distortion of Bemba indigenous beliefs, which also contributed to the change in the discourse. *Imbusa* as a womanhood-centered rite took on a full patriarchal garment with a single focus on submission and pleasing the husband (Kaunda 2013: 43).

What is called cultural hybridity, for Bemba, reflects material legacies of colonialism and imperialism. The contemporary *imbusa* practice reflects “the structural, systemic, cultural, discursive, and epistemological pattern of domination that has engulfed Africans since the Conquest” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a: 3). The colonality of *imbusa* captures long-established patterns of power established with colonialism and contact with various cultures and religions, which Bemba women themselves have adopted and reproduced through the core values of *imbusa* as well as through religion, politics, relations and knowledge construction. *Imbusa* has been reduced to a sexual ritual with almost no bearing on the socio-political struggle and wellbeing of women (Mushibwe, 2009 and Kaunda, 2013). The women who teach have no exposure either to contemporary change, as was established earlier in my research (Kaunda, 2013: 47), or to the precolonial aspects of *imbusa*. *Imbusa* has become a stronghold of the patriarchal predisposition and in its teaching women have adopted missionary socio-cultural traditional norms that limit gender equality, and subjugate women to male domination (Mushibwe, 2009).

Imbusa was the oppositional and resistant space through which the thought system of the Bemba people could have remained intact if it was not for the interaction with various cultures. Through coloniality of *imbusa*, the Bemba psyche was dismantled and the missionaries and colonialists could easily control the thoughts and minds of the Bemba women and men. According to Donald Baker (1975), thought and mind control was the final stage and most brutal mode of domination. By tampering with the tradition that embedded the worldview, Bemba people were uprooted and disoriented and easily accepted the imposed Eurocentric value system. This is reflected in the obsession that many Bemba people have with Eurocentric cultural values and how they scorn and despise their own cultural values and institutions (Kaunda, 2012). Hospitality is an important aspect of Bemba culture and this escalated into valuing Western cultures over Bemba cultures in certain aspects of the Bemba. Harvey Sindima (1995: 60) has aptly shown how both colonialists and missionaries used education as a tool to establish thought control of African people. He argues:

Thought control uproots and disorients people by imposing on them a different value system until they become obsessed with the values imposed upon them. This disorientation begins by corrupting thought and language, for people interpret and understand their experience of reality through these media; consequently, their emotions and relationships are conditioned by this "reality." Without self-conscious realization of their own identity, a people cannot reject the disorienting language; the process of alienation becomes total.

Chammah Kaunda (2015: 76) in his article, *Denial of African Agency*, argues that, "this mode of control was the subtlest because it established and encourages cultural dependency." The colonialists and missionaries knew that if they corrupted African cultural value systems, people would become vulnerable and defenseless, thereby conditioning and making them perpetual dependents. Judith Butler (1997:6) captures this argument well in her book, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*:

The master, who at first appears to be "external" to the slave, re-emerges as the slave's own conscience. The unhappiness of the consciousness that emerges is its own self-beratement, the effect of the transmutation of the master into a psychic reality. The self-mortifications that seek to redress the insistent corporeality of self-consciousness institutes bad conscience...In each case, power that at first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity. The subject is formed by a will that turns back upon itself, assuming a reflexive form, then the subject is the modality of power that turns on itself; the subject is the effect of power in recoil.

This is a process that scholars of African cultures have variously described as colonization of the mind (Fanon 1969, Thiong'o 1986) or 'alterity' (Mudimbe 1988). These mental representations

become what Teun van Dijk (1997: 27) calls “social cognition” because for the Bemba people, this is shared through colonial discourse disguised as *imbusa* teaching.

The struggle to de-link from colonial discourse is also evident in recent scholarship on *imbusa*, researchers like Lumbwe (2004). Lumbwe compares pre-colonial weddings to current or post-independence white weddings in Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces of Zambia in his Master’s thesis titled “*Ubwinga* ceremonies: A Comparison between the Pre-colonial Era and the White Wedding Ceremonies of the Post-independence Era”. Mushibwe (2009: 32-35) argues that colonialism,

...continues to impact on their attitude towards the education of their children much more than of the female child. The pedagogy in use is predominantly teacher centred, which could cultivate rote learning rather than critical investigation skills in the learners... However, what is questionable is the nature of knowledge that was imposed upon the colonized people through the education system: It tended to benefit the colonizing states by creating useful “servants” out of the indigenous people for the colonizing nation. Therefore, the indigenous people were equipped with restricted knowledge and skills to undertake clerical/serviceable duties on behalf of the colonizing nation. Such type of education did not benefit the majority of Zambians let alone the female population.

Mushibwe, in the quote above, demonstrates that colonialism infiltrated all spheres of the colonised spaces and even the education it presented aimed at keeping the colonised “in their place”. Siwila (2011: 31) has also stated that “...in 1917 Britain enacted the marriage ordinances in the then Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) based on the British Colonial African standards.” Such standards resulted in the neglect of the girl child education; while within the indigenous worldview, girls were traditionally the ones who attended a school while boys learnt informally, as Kapwepwe (1994: 48) has highlighted. Kangwa (2011: 25) explains, for instance, that while the Bemba people perceived women as initiators of prayers, “the missionaries and the colonial powers did not recognise women as religious leaders, as priests were predominantly male.” *Imbusa* scholars hence have developed positions that appear to reproduce the very problematic of centre and margin that characterised western anthropological research on *imbusa*. They have not challenged Western assumptions and representations of *imbusa* based on indigenous perspectives and have rather tapped into the language of binary opposition in which Africa is consistently compared to Western society. Therefore, postcolonial indigenous research approaches toward indigenous knowledge systems such as *imbusa*

must, as their starting point, resist becoming unconscious or conscious perpetrators of Western discourse and appropriating such Western discourse of domination.

3.2. Postcolonial Indigenous Approaches as Discourse of Resistance and Decolonisation

Recent postcolonial theorisations draw on diverse concepts such as “post-colonialism”, “the post-colonial condition”, “the post-colonial scene”, “the post-colonial intellectual”, “the emerging disciplinary space of postcolonialism”, “postcolonializing”, “postcolonial indigenous” and “decoloniality”⁵⁹ to advance postcolonial arguments. Pinkie Mekgwe (2008: 12) argues that “these formulations attest to the varied directions subsumed under ‘postcolonial studies’ and the associated problematic of defining and mapping out succinct ‘postcolonial borders.’” The focus in this study is postcolonial indigenous discourse as a tool for resisting dominant discourse by critically recovering *imbusa* knowledge as not only discursive but also actual spaces of agency. This opens up the possibility of reconceptualising the precolonial past in the postcolonial present in the life experiences of Bemba women.

Linda Smith (1999:2), in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, argues that the “postcolonial indigenous approach invites you to problematize research and do research ‘as a significant site of the struggle between the interest and knowing of the West and the interest and knowing of the ‘Other.’” The ‘Other’ refers to those who experienced colonialism and imperialism. Postcolonial indigenous discourse is connected with the formally colonised and historically marginalised. The endeavour to engage with indigenous knowledge systems such as *imbusa* is a postcolonial endeavour since as indigenous knowledge, it arises from women who experienced colonisation and continue to struggle for holistic decolonisation and inclusive liberation. As a “politics of reversal”, Melanie Dupuis (2002: 213), argues that postcolonial indigenous discourse is a reclamation of corrective tools that seek to construct knowledge that can enable people to recover and reconstitute indigenous ways of perceiving the world and act on it within the present views. The argument is well articulated by Jonathan Friedman (1992: 853) who asserts, “That the past is always practiced in the present, not

⁵⁹ See for example, McClintock Fulkerson (1993), Quayson (2000), Mekgwe (2008), Chilisa (2012), Smith (1999).

because the past imposes itself, but because subjects in the present fashion the past in the practice of their social identity. Thus 'the organization of the current situation in the terms of a past' can only occur in the present." This means that postcolonial indigenous discourse is not about retrieving a mythical past but a way of reclaiming and reconstituting the political ideology that undergirds the *imbusa* traditional practice by conceptualising it within contemporary power-sensitive discourses.

One of the African forerunners of anti-colonial discourse, Frantz Fanon (1963:2), in his germinal work *The Wretched of the Earth*, written in colonial times in the Algerian context yet futuristic in orientation, foregrounded postcolonial indigenous practice in decolonisation. He argued that:

Decolonization never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History. It infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men (sic), with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men (sic)...The "thing" colonized becomes a man (sic) through the very process of liberation. Decolonization, therefore, implies the urgent need to thoroughly challenge the colonial situation.

The significance of Fanon's argument lies in the fact that he saw a critical relationship between language as a primary method of conveying human ideas and issues of knowledge and power. The use of specific language too often results in the production of knowledge and social relations that serve to justify power relations. Religion, for instance, appeals to sacred texts as the divine language that legitimises unequal power relations between women and men. In the traditional Bemba society as shown above, the religio-cultural language discourse empowered women as equal social actors and not the divine language introduced by missionaries that dishonoured women. Therefore, language discourse is not just a means of domination but also a means of resistance. Within Bemba thought, postcolonial discourse must be understood as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying oblivion (that the Bemba people have) to colonial language imposition. A postcolonial indigenous approach "is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and crucially, interrogating the colonial past" (Gandhi 1998:4). The aim of postcolonial indigenous discourse is to understand how the present has been historically and socially constructed to find critical premises for recovery and reconstitution of knowledges that are related to the lived experiences of the women within dominant ideological landscapes.

Namsoon Kang (2010: 31-33) writes that, “postcolonial discourse deals with the questions of identity and subject-hood, authenticity, representation or interconnectedness of power-knowledge”. She (2010:33) further points out that it is about dismantling any form of domination and subjugation by problematizing and de-centering “the very perception of the paradigm of centre-margin.” This is reflected in the definition of postcolonial African feminisms as articulated by Pinkie Mekgwe (2008: 15) in her, “Theorizing African Feminism(s): the ‘Colonial’ Question”. She defines African feminism as postcolonial indigenous discourse that:

Takes care to delineate those concerns that are peculiar to the African situation. It also questions features of traditional African cultures without denigrating them, understanding that these might be viewed differently by the different classes of women. One sphere that has increasingly held the attention of theorists like Steady has been the question of the involvement of men. The rationale is that, if African feminism is to succeed as a humane reformation project, it cannot accept separatism from the opposite sex. Eschewing male exclusion then, becomes one defining feature of African feminism that differentiates it from feminism as it is conceptualized in the west.

Through the focus on issues of defining postcolonial African feminism without reference to Western feminism, Mekgwe (2008:13) manages to begin the process of ideological delinking as she challenges binaries and focuses on interdependencies, conceiving of neo-colonial cultural forces that construct women as the ‘Other’ within African society. Her perspective also brings us closer to Bemba inclusive matriarchitarianist knowledge of life in which the pursuit of both women and men was to be equal thereby becoming like *Lesa* (a holistic being with the fullness of both sexualities) functioning at the borderland, between and betwixt femininity and masculinity (Kapwepwe 1994: 1-3). Postcolonial indigenous discourse is an approach that suggests re-embracing this original vision in present-day Zambia. The struggle must be to disengage *imbusa* from the neo-colonialist trap that shapes and dominates the Bemba worldview and prescribes the role of women within patriarchalized Bemba society. This requires a decolonial lens for *imbusa* scholars in order to critically engage with *imbusa* teachings as they are currently disseminated. In this way, a postcolonial and decolonial indigenous approach is a transformative healing theoretical turn, endeavouring to raise awareness of the change in the *imbusa* and the possibility that the change contributes to Bemba women’s oppression. It is theoretical thinking that evolved in building solidarity and promoting harmony.

Indeed, it is about ideological de-linking, as Samir Amin (1990a, 1990b, and 1997) cogently argues in several of his works. This remains a key strategic argument in his analysis of the colonial and imperial situation in Africa. He defines the notion in the following way:

Delinking is the refusal to submit to the demands of the worldwide law of value, or the supposed 'rationality' of the system It, therefore, presupposes the society's capacity to define for itself an alternative range of criteria of rationality...' (Amin 1990b: 90).

The challenge of working with marginalised groups is that, as Paulo Freire (1993: 17-18) argues, through oppression, people lose their identity and tend to name the “oppressor’s reality as their own, and therefore contribute to their own oppression.” The question is if Bemba *amafunde yambusa* curriculum is trapped in the patriarchal monopolistic nexus, how could postcolonial and decolonial indigenous knowledge, as an ideological delinking strategy of *imbusa*, be a form of liberation? This question arises from the key question that this study focuses on: *How do Bemba career married women engage with the traditional cultural curriculum of marriage (amafunde yambusa) in their daily lives at home and workplace?* The traditional *imbusa* curriculum has been affected in its contact with different cultures.

To begin responding to the question, I refer to Lyn Carter’s “The Armchair at the Borders”, which identifies two aspects of thinking that are also applicable to postcolonial indigenous discourse; the two aspects are demonstrated below. These aspects have potential for physical and mental liberation and social justice. First, Carter (2010: 440; see also Hudson 2012: 170) argues that it is important to recognise and fracture the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge and related means of producing and validating knowledge for conceptualising the world; this is the way in which knowledge about marriage has been produced in *imbusa* teachings from the time Zambia was colonised. This requires recognising the validity of all other knowledge (Hudson 2012:170) and “limitations of all discourses and concepts like emancipation that carry with them the referents of Eurocentrism” (Carter 2010: 440). Second, Carter (2010: 440) stresses that it “requires the delinking from Northern knowledges. This involves “an epistemic shift from what he terms, the theo, ego and organo-logical principles of Eurocentric knowledge toward the geo- and body-politics of “other” knowledges.” The new knowledge must be generated from the lived experiences of women and other marginalised groups. In this sense, the lived experiences of the Bemba career women who have gone through the *imbusa*

rite in its neo-colonial form is connected to the ways in which knowledge about marriage is produced through *imbusa* teachings.

3.3. Postcolonial Indigenous Approach: A Strategy towards Decolonising Imbusa

In terms of theological, religious, anthropological, philosophical, sociological and political inferences, the significance of postcolonial indigenous discourse as strategy for decolonising *imbusa* knowledge for Bemba career married women in Zambia is centered on the question of female liberation. The challenge presented by postcolonial indigenous African feminism offers new theoretical possibilities to address practices of patriarchy wrought through colonialism, reproduced and propagated through *imbusa* discourse. It is a “struggle centred methodology with a specific focus on helping women perceive the limitations that they place on themselves” (Rowlands 1997: 134). A question arises: how do we construct *imbusa* knowledge that can disperse the effects of the colonialist construct? I suggest three theoretical and methodological sources arising from this question:

First, using a postcolonial indigenous approach, this study sought for the “retraditionalization”⁶⁰ of *imbusa* curriculum for the contemporary Zambian or African scene (Mazrui 2005, Mudimbe 1988, Mazrui and Tidy 1984). Ali Mazrui and Michael Tidy (1984: 283) in their book, *Nationalism and New States in Africa*, observed that:

Another obstacle to cultural liberation has been the confusion of the concept of modernization with Westernization. In fact, retraditionalization of African culture can take modernizing forms, especially if it becomes an aspect of decolonization. Retraditionalization does not mean returning Africa to what it was before Europeans came ... But a move towards renewed respect for indigenous ways and the conquest of cultural self-contempt may be the minimal conditions for cultural decolonization.

⁶⁰ “Retraditionalization” is “a move towards renewed respect for indigenous ways and the conquest of cultural self-contempt” as defined by Mazrui and Tidy (1984: 283) See also Ault (1983).

The notion of retraditionalization is the first step toward reclaiming *imbusa* curriculum from the Euro-Western form it has taken since colonization, using African feminism. This framework is sensitive and responsive to identity, place, and power. According to Mama (1997: 43), re-invention of life-giving and power-sensitive cultural values and ideals are at the core of African feminist interrogation and reconceptualization of gender relations. Hence, African feminist discussion is situated within the historical, sociocultural, religious, struggle for female subjectivity in contemporary Africa.

Feminist postcolonial indigenous discourse rewrites the relationship between the margin and the centre by reviewing the colonialist and imperialist ideologies that structure *imbusa* knowledge resulting in Bemba women's re-appropriation of equal relation practices. In the words of Henry A. Giroux (1992: 22-23):

At stake here is the task of demystifying and deconstructing forms of privilege that benefit maleness, whiteness, and property as well as those conditions that have disabled others to speak in places where those who are privileged by virtue of the legacy of colonial power assume authority and the conditions for human agency.

This approach is what Chela Sandoval (1995) calls “oppositional consciousness” which is an intentional endeavour to produce transgressive consciousness. This is a consciousness, which brings the realisation that *imbusa*, has been alienated or disentangled from its cultural values and ideals. Is there a possibility that Bemba women can reclaim their humanity, dignity and equality in a patriarchal society? A postcolonial indigenous approach suggests a need for liberating *imbusa* curriculum from impartiality and fundamentally reordering the understanding of the relation between *imbusa*'s historical past of gender equality and how that can be reclaimed and reconstructed within the present reality of the struggle for gender justice. In other words, the intention is to reconceptualise *imbusa* in a global participatory mode of feminist consciousness.

Further, a postcolonial indigenous approach redefines “emancipatory rhetoric of modernity from the cosmologies and epistemologies paradigm of subalterns” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a:25). The subaltern in this study are Bemba career married women who are located on the oppressed side of colonial difference (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a). This is similar to Paulo Freire's (1970) argument in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that the teaching and learning process is never neutral; in *imbusa*, the women

in solidarity teach the young as well as learn from each other's experiences. *Imbusa*, like many other institutions, can either be an instrument of domination or liberation depending on how it is taught. In the analysis in chapters seven and eight, I have demonstrated how the *imbusa* content has affected Bemba women. There are forms of teaching processes that domesticate people – where there exists a dominant culture of silence for instance. In this form of teaching (with a dominant culture of silence), the oppressed are intentionally exposed to the reality of their oppression which they might have internalised as their own reality but are left to silently accept oppressive knowledge without questioning. Hence, their conception of social reality is limited to what they have been taught and believed. Giroux (1992: 22) asserts, “postcolonial critics have argued that the history and politics of difference are often informed by a legacy of colonialism that warrants analyzing the exclusions and repressions that allow specific forms of privilege to remain unacknowledged...” Njoki Wane (2011:18) asserts that African feminism:

[S]peaks to the many specific realities and locations of African women, thus placing us at the center of analysis. The politics of privilege, power and especially the power of self-definition and self-determination are fundamental to [women] liberation and empowerment. As it is crucial to highlight the specifics of African feminist consciousness, it is important to note that this theory also espouses the importance of challenges to each other by being self-reflexive and to acknowledge our privileges and the sites where we may oppress others who do not possess such privilege.

3.4. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore the emancipatory possibilities of a postcolonial indigenous approach as an African feminist resistance and liberation theoretical framework. The chapter sought to demonstrate how *imbusa* discourse was stripped of the traditional matricentric thought that undergirded the Bemba world and coloured its teaching. A feminist postcolonial approach was proposed as suitable for the research because it initiates a process of resistance against distorted knowledge disguised as African knowledge. This does not entail an outright rejection of Euro-Western knowledge but it is a struggle to retraditionalize and reinterpret the *imbusa* past within the constellation of various feminist struggles for the liberation and equality of women in the world. I conclude in the words of Jemie Chinweizu and Madubuike Mechukwu (1985: 239):

On the one hand, our culture has to destroy all encrustations of colonial mentality, and on the other hand, has to map out new foundations for an African modernity. This cultural task demands a deliberate and calculated process of syncretism: one that, above all, emphasizes valuable continuities with our pre-colonial culture, welcomes vitalizing contributions from other cultures, and exercises inventive genius in making a healthy and distinguished synthesis from them all.

In the following chapter, I describe the Copperbelt Province where the fieldwork for this study was carried out. The Copperbelt is a province mapped out by the colonialists around the time that they discovered copper in Zambia. I describe its formation and the spread of *amafunde yambusa* from Northern Province, which is the Bemba community, to the postcolonial Copperbelt Province.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICS OF LOCATION: MARRIED BEMBA CAREER

WOMEN ON THE COPPERBELT PROVINCE OF ZAMBIA

I have been plagued by what I will call the politics of location - those places and spaces we inherit and occupy, which frame our lives in very specific and concrete ways, which are as much a part of our psyches as they are a physical or geographical placement – Joan Borsa (1990: 36)

4.0. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the Copperbelt province of Zambia and its formation, because it is where the participants of this study live and work. The chapter outlines the context in which *imbusa* teachings were transferred from Northern and Luapula Provinces of Zambia in the colonial period, and were implanted on the Copperbelt. Mushibwe (2009) has argued that initiation rites have remained unchanged in the villages in rural Zambia. The question I am raising is whether *amafunde yambusa* have indeed remained as they were in Northern and Luapula Provinces after being exported into Zambian cities such as in the Copperbelt Province. In order to effectively respond to the objectives of this study, the physical or geographical context of the Bemba career women living in the Copperbelt province of Zambia is necessary. This chapter critically discusses the Copperbelt as a location for the fieldwork that was carried out between October and November 2014. “Politics of location” is used as a central conceptual framework in this chapter to denote “sites of resistance - spaces where critical positioning or a process of identification, articulation and representation can occur” (Borsa 1990: 37), in order to represent the Bemba women and the social space they live in. Locating the Bemba women on the Copperbelt is imperative as the teachings that hold their identities as married women have encountered several cultures from the time the Bemba migrated from Northern Province. Due to interaction and contact with diverse cultures and races, *imbusa* teachings have undergone some form of transformation and as a result, the discourse has not remained the same.

Borsa (1990: 36) shows the importance of locating oneself because “where we live, how we live, our relation to the social systems and structures that surround us are deeply embedded parts of everything we do and remain integral both to our identity or sense of self and to our position or status within a larger cultural and representational field.” Being a feminist or gender activist does not make our political, social, economic and historical realities the same. As Phiri and Nadar (2006: 12) have argued, within Africa our contexts as women are not the same; our cultural contexts are diverse and should be articulated within that context. For this reason in this chapter, I examine the Copperbelt, which is the context of Bemba people who participated in this research. Borsa (1990:36) grapples with the questions, “Who sets the parameters for discourse, representation and practice and where we are in relation to those agendas? Are our personal and social locations ‘in’ the parameters we take on?” Awareness of the social context of the Bemba married career women in the Copperbelt province of Zambia is important in this chapter in order to analyse their negotiation and navigation of *amafunde yambusa* and why they negotiate *amafunde yambusa* or fail to negotiate in the way that they do. Documenting the emergence of the Copperbelt is necessary in this thesis as it demonstrates factors that may have led to the way *imbusa* teachings have evolved or remained static in the Copperbelt Province. This chapter also aims at exploring how *imbusa* teachings on the Copperbelt as exported from Northern and Luapula provinces of Zambia, the provinces of the Bemba people. This is important as it shows the context in which Bemba women locate themselves and have careers.

4.1. The Copperbelt Province of Zambia

Zambia is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, which obtained its independence from British rule on 24 October 1964. The Copperbelt province is one of the ten provinces in Zambia.⁶¹ Marcella Kraay (2011: 17)⁶² explains that, “Besides farming for internal consumption, the country’s economy has traditionally relied heavily on copper mining and exports”. Alistair Fraser (2010: 3)⁶³ shows that around the 1890s, Cecil Rhodes and his British South African Company (Henceforth, BSAC) were increasing the British influence around the Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) region. William Collier

⁶¹ Central Province, Copperbelt Province, Eastern Province, Luapula Province, Lusaka Province, Muchinga Province, Northern Province, North-Western Province, Southern Province, and Western Province.

⁶² See also Fraser (2010) and Ferguson (1999).

⁶³ See also Ferguson (1999: 2); Mususa (2010: 23); Mayondi (2014).

is alleged to having discovered “copper on the spot where he had shot a roan antelope in 1902” (Mwakikagile 2010:184). However, Godfrey Mwakikagile (2010: 184)⁶⁴ further asserts that it took about twenty years before any tangible technical advancement could be reached to make the mining of copper on the Copperbelt beneficial for the colonial officials.

James Ferguson (1999: 2) explains how fast Zambia became industrialised, and “Within a few short years following the development of commercial copper mining, mining towns sprang up all along the Copperbelt”. Although, the early European explorers discovered ethnic indigenous diggings on the Copperbelt which showed that indigenous people knew about copper, colonialists could not credit the discovery of copper to the local people. Fraser (2010: 3) argues that the Zambian people knew about copper’s existence before the colonial officials became aware of it. However, with the colonial officials’ awareness of copper existence, many Zambian men became hired labour on the Copperbelt. This means that Bemba men, together with men from other ethnic groups, migrated from their communities where they had their own way of living, to the Copperbelt province of Zambia (Ault 1983: 182). In the Copperbelt province, Bemba men began to meet and interact with different ethnic groups and other races. The Copperbelt province was a fast growing industrial centre in Africa as the BSAC enlisted many locals to work: “[T]hey built one of the greatest concentrations of industry and urban development on the African continent”, notes Fraser (2010: 4). With this development, there was an influx of scholars. In fact, “In 1938 Roger Wilson established the first local anthropological facility in an African colony. Although Fraser (2010) refers to Roger Wilson, the actual name of the person that was instrumental in the Rhodes-Livingstone institute is Godfrey Wilson. Researchers at the new Rhodes-Livingstone Institute studied the Copperbelt’s social and economic spaces as a means to understand wider phenomena: modernization, industrialization, capitalism, race and ethnicity.” in Zambia (Fraser 2010: 2). Fraser (2010: 2)⁶⁵ explains that the mines first produced copper in 1929 – the same period the great depression struck. This began the making of the Copperbelt province, as well as “the economic and political development of the Copperbelt” (Fraser 2010: 3). The Bemba people, like many other ethnic groups, came to the Copperbelt as hired labor and inevitably mixed with different cultures that affected their own worldviews and value systems. Michael Burawoy, a professor in the

⁶⁴ For more on this discussion, see also Fraser (2010); Ferguson (1999); Parpart (1983).

⁶⁵ See also Ferguson (1999); Ault (1983).

department of Sociology at the University of California (2014: 964), in his article “The Colour of Class Revisited: Four Decades of Postcolonialism in Zambia”, worked on the copper mines a few years into Zambia’s independence and was responsible for:

The job evaluation scheme (which) was designed to bring together the white and black pay scales (with expatriates given a special allowance), but in such a way that it would leave untouched the racial order in the mines. In particular, it was understood that the colour bar – the principle that no black should exercise authority over any white – would have to be reproduced, despite the (post-) independence struggle against racial injustice.

This structure in the mines was reproduced in the local miners’ homes, as the men became like bosses over their wives (Ault 1983), while in the Northern Province where the Bemba people came from women were priestesses of their home shrines. In fact, in the same way though referring to the missionaries, Rasing (2001:198) argues that:

Missionaries’ attempts to abolish various cultural values resulted in anger among women. Discussions started between women and missionaries about male and female equality. According to women, equality was inherent in their culture whereas the priests claimed that it was biblical. Ultimately, in 1949, these discussions led to a training course for wives of catechists to become catechists themselves.

It seems that at some point the missionaries and colonial officials developed similar interests in the African people and worked toward achieving those goals of Christianizing and civilizing the people. Women were not employed in the mines during the colonial period and therefore had to depend totally on their spouses financially. In this entire process, Ferguson (1999:6) argues, “urbanization, then, seemed to be a teleological process, a movement toward a known end point that would be nothing less than a Western-style industrial modernity.” This further spread into the social lives not only of the Bemba but also of the people of Zambia at large. As Zambians began to “adapt” (which was the anthropological buzzword of the early 1900s) to industrialization, their social structures began to change as well. With men out of the villages to work on the Copperbelt around the 1930s, women also began to migrate to the city; it was during this period that marriages began to change (Ault 1983: 185).

The Copperbelt province comprises 10 districts, namely, Chililabombwe, Chingola, Kalulushi, Kitwe, Luanshya, Lufwanyama, Masaiti, Mpongwe, Mufulira and Ndola. However, areas such as Masaiti, Mpongwe, Lufwanyama have remained rural. The focus of this study is on Chingola town, founded in 1943 (Musongole 2010). From around then, it was known to be the cleanest city in Zambia. The city is the home of Nchanga Open Pits, which covers nearly 30 km² and is believed to be one of the largest open cast mine in the world (Musongole 2010: 12). The population of Chingola, as captured during the 2010 Census, was about 216,626 (Central Statistical Office 2010). Like the entire Copperbelt province, Chingola uses a Bemba-type multilingual practice known as language of the city or Town Bemba, which exemplifies urbanity however, is not completely tied to urban life thought. Town Bemba is positioned in opposition to a more ‘authentic Bemba’ spoken in rural areas of the Northern Province. Although there were various other Zambian ethnic groups together with groups from other African countries that migrated to the Copperbelt province, the Bemba dominated (Spitulnik 1999). Haynes (2012: vii), in her “Ambitious Obligations: Pentecostalism, Social Life, and Political Economy on the Zambian Copperbelt”, explains, “The Copperbelt *lingua franca* is known as Town Bemba. This is an urban variety of iciBemba with a large lexical input from English” as well as other regional Bantu languages such as Nyanja, Lozi, Tonga, Chewa, Swahili, (Yoruba and Igbo are the new additions), even some Zulu and Afrikaans and many others. The hybridity increases as individuals learn words from other languages that they integrate within Town Bemba, and others pick those words; often when musicians add a certain language to their songs that language becomes part of the Town Bemba. It is an ever-evolving language. This hybrid Bemba-type language is classified variously depending on the class of its users, namely, “a Street Town Bemba, an Elite Town Bemba, a Smooth Town Bemba, and a Common or Everyday Town Bemba” (Spitulnik 1999: 32). In her empirical research, “The Language of the City: Town Bemba as Urban Hybridity,”⁶⁶ Debra Spitulnik (1999: 32) noted that:

All of these varieties have strong connections with notions of ‘modern urban life’ in contrast to ‘traditional rural life,’ but they also can have widely differing social connotations: a rough, economically harsh, and even criminal subculture; a trendy and playful youth subculture; a sophisticated, cosmopolitan lifestyle; or simply, the generic urban orientation.

⁶⁶ Debra Spitulnik (1999) presents a detailed discussion of the history and development of Town Bemba with examples of how it is used in various sub-social groups. She discusses the implications of the language in understanding both the Copperbelt and how languages evolve. She argues that Town Bemba is not a language in transition and must be regarded as a language in its own right.

This means that the way Town Bemba is spoken within various sub-social groups, has a lot to do with their socio-economic class, religious, and even political status. Speakers are easily differentiated in the ways they have hybridised and speak the language. Town Bemba in its hybridity is collectively the Copperbelt *lingua franca*.

Fraser (2010: 4) explains how the people of Zambia (including the Bemba) began to experiment with an urban lifestyle, showing that “many who joined the industry moved from rural to city life, subsistence to wage labor, loyalty to chiefs to participation in trade unions and political parties”. With this interaction with different cultures and races, and changes in their value systems and beliefs as well as their lifestyle, Bemba women’s values began to be altered in order to fit into the space that of which they had become a part. This is the space and place where I locate the Bemba women – Copperbelt, Chingola. Ferguson (1999: 6-7)⁶⁷ argues that in 1969, Zambia was seen as one of the African countries that would “soon” be ranked as a developed country; however, as soon as the Copperbelt mines were in the hands of its indigenous Zambians, the copper prices declined. This resulted in job losses for many mineworkers in the Copperbelt province and suffering ensued for many Copperbelt families. As soon as the mines were privatised, the global prices for copper rose rapidly. Was it a mere coincidence that the copper prices fluctuated low and high at the points when the mines were handed to the Zambians and privatised to foreign investors? Was there a possibility that the colonialists wanted to remain in power despite the independence of the country? Burawoy (2010: 183) explains that indigenous Zambians were not to be given positions in the mines that would give them oversight over the colonialists. This seems to suggest that the rise and fall of copper prices at critical moments for independent infant Zambia was a way of keeping the local Zambians in “their place” below their colonial officials. Both Ferguson (1999) and Fraser (2010) note that, “In 1969 Zambia was classified a middle-income country, with one of the highest per capita GDPs in Africa three times that of Kenya, twice that of Egypt, and higher than Brazil, Malaysia, Turkey, and South Korea”. Further, Ferguson (1999: 7) adds, after some years of sturdy economic growth because of rising copper prices, the copper prices declined and had a very negative impact on the Zambian economy. This negative impact affected many families on the Copperbelt and the result was poverty. Despite all this, the Copperbelt was formed, and after independence,

⁶⁷ See also Fraser (2010).

many Zambians were optimistic of better lives; however, whether this optimism was realised remains a question.

This is the atmosphere in which the Copperbelt was formed; ethnic groups within Zambia came into close contact with each other and with Western culture as well. Such contact brought with it much transformation for the Bemba women who are the focus of this study. Their cultural values began to transform radically. The Copperbelt has around nine towns and the next section centres on the social life in Chingola, a city in which fieldwork was carried out.

4.1.1. Social Life in Chingola

Like Nsofu, a town on the Copperbelt that Haynes (2012: 10) researched in 2012, Chingola is a middle class town with many people in formal employment. Chingola's socio-economic status, marketing and trade, social and cultural practices vary as it has several ethnic groups. "The mining sector accounts for a great deal of the available work, whether in the form of direct employment at the mine or with one of the many firms that keep it running" (Haynes, 2012: 10; Musongole, 2010). Many of the people work as teachers in private and government primary and secondary schools, nurses, as doctors, lawyers, and accountants, etc. Various people in Chingola "like many people in Zambia more generally, are engaged in what is usually glossed as 'business': trade, often informal, in goods purchased as nearby as Lusaka (Zambia's capital) or as far away as Dubai" (Haynes 2012:10). As noted by Dyless Musongole (2010: 10), "miners dominate the urban area, they work underground and at the open pit copper mines. The mining company which was previously known as Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) is now called Konkola Copper Mines (KCM) owned by London-listed Vedanta Resources." Similar to Haynes' (2012: 13) description of Nsofu town in Kitwe, Chingola is home to many missionary-formed churches. Most of the people in Chingola claim to be Christians and belong to different denominations, including Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptist and especially, Pentecostal and United Church of Zambia denominations. Musongole (2010:14) further explains the social activities of the people in Chingola. There are social clubs such as Rugby, Bowling, Cricket, Golf and Hockey where many people, especially men go to socialise. There are also many "kitchen parties" for young brides as well as weddings and *amafunde yambusa* that are dominated by women. Kitchen

parties are equivalent to bridal showers; however, at kitchen parties, a bride receives gifts ranging from kitchen utensils to lounge suites and bedroom furniture, depending on the financial status of the invited guests. These are some of the social activities predominantly for women of all ethnic groups on the Copperbelt, just like other provinces in Zambia. Most of the ethnic groups in Zambia have adopted these teachings as well. In fact, when I went through the teachings myself, two Bemba women and one Lunda⁶⁸ woman taught me. The Copperbelt currently embraces *amafunde* (teachings/instruction) of other ethnic groups and usually it is not just one ethnic group teaching; rather, there has been the incorporation of other ethnic groups teaching together. This mixing of ethnic groups within the Copperbelt points to the fact that there is no such a thing as true Bemba. Many people are Bemba by marriage, adoption, or even as a result of what they stand to benefit out of being Bemba as Van Binsbergen (n.d.:93) shows. In keeping with the language, the teaching may be regarded as ‘Town *Imbusa*’ to contrast it with a more ‘raw’ traditional *Imbusa* in the rural areas. There is a need to do more investigation to understand how the Town *Imbusa* and Traditional *Imbusa* might be regarded as different – the former as hybrid and the latter as traditional. In traditional *imbusa*, *Lesa* (God) was central to the teachings while in the town *imbusa*, *Lesa* has been left out of the teachings (Hinfelaar 1994). The town *imbusa* has tended to focus more on money (how much *banacimbusa* will be paid) while in the rural areas, it is an obligation for the older women to teach the young brides even without monetary payments. Similarly, in town *imbusa*, the rites focus mostly on sex, while in the raw *imbusa* in the village, it still centers on women as custodians of the home and how they can provide for their families without depending totally on their spouse for their upkeep. Further, in town *imbusa*, the teaching embraces a ‘Zambianized’ culture, meaning that all ethnic groups as well as those from other African nations such as Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe for instance, are welcome in the teaching space as long as they have undergone a similar/equivalent of *imbusa* teaching. In the rural *imbusa* space, only Bemba women who have undergone the *imbusa* teaching would be allowed, the rite is exclusively Bemba.

Many houses in Chingola were state owned as and were privatized or sold in 1997 “by presidential decree” to mine workers and those that could afford to buy them, after the copper mines were privatised (Mususa 2010: 380). Most people used to rent houses (after the privatisation of the mines) and while some still rent houses, it has become a trend for many working people to build their own

⁶⁸ Lunda is an ethnic group from North-Western province of Zambia.

houses in Zambia. With all these and more changes over the years and decades, *amafunde yambusa* have not remained unchanged; the process may have remained the same, however the content of these teachings may have been affected in one way or another. The next section focuses on the traditional cultural Bemba worldview before delving into the *imbusa* curriculum to provide a glimpse into what the *imbusa* course teaches Bemba women. Before I present the traditional Bemba worldview that was enshrined within matricentric⁶⁹, matriloal⁷⁰, and matriclan⁷¹ ideology, it is important to also deal with the Town Bemba worldview on the Copperbelt.

4.1.2. Town Bemba Worldview: Urban Hybridity

The contemporary Copperbelt cultural landscape is an amalgam of cross-cultural influences from various Zambian ethnic groups as well as Western culture and Christianity, amalgamated, patch-worked, and webbed together in various layers. The Copperbelt culture is fluid, hybrid, unbound and constantly undergoing construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. The Bemba people have made a significant contribution in shaping political, cultural and social life of Zambia and on the Copperbelt. Many people would affiliate themselves to being Bemba because of what benefits they might have. The first president, Kenneth Kaunda, and his vice president, Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe, were Bemba. I am aware of the accusations leveled at former president Kenneth Kaunda of being a Malawian; however, if he is a Zambian, his surname suggests that he is a Bemba man. Two other former presidents, Frederick Chiluba and Michael Sata, are Bemba men as well. While president Chiluba faced numerous accusations as being a Congolese in his first year as president, being from Luapula Province indicates him being a Bemba.

Scholars who do their research on the Copperbelt, such as Naomi Haynes (2013), have used Bemba concepts sometimes in an essentialist manner, imposing them on people who may not be Bemba. For example, Haynes deals with a group of women from various ethnic groups – as seen from the names, such as Mrs Mwanza and Mrs Ilunga (Ngoni), Mrs Sinkala (Namwanga), and only one Bemba woman, Mrs Mumba. Interethnic marriage is common in Zambia and some of these women

⁶⁹ Matricentric in this study means family system that centers upon the mother.

⁷⁰ Matriloal is a custom whereby the husband goes to live with the wife's community at marriage.

⁷¹ Matriclan means a clan that has membership determined by descent from a common female ancestor.

might have acquired these names by marriage while they (the women) are Bemba themselves; if that is the case, Haynes could have declared so in her research. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of the group and to bring into discussion various ethnic terminologies applied to the concept of *imbusa* in order to affirm the uniqueness and contribution of each ethnic group. Kapwepwe (1994:6) has argued that Zambian ethnic groups have diverse beliefs concerning marriage; some ethnic groups respect marital instructions while others may not. Some ethnic groups like the Bemba, due to their matrilineal and matrilocal system of thought, believe in monogamy and marriage for a lifetime. They use an old adage “*ifwe tuli baBemba tatusamba nwen shibili*” translated as, “we are the Bemba, we do not bath in two basins.” (This means that marriage is for life and is between two individuals). The interpretation is that marriage for the Bemba people is for life and the only grounds for remarriage for the Bemba is the death of a spouse and the surviving spouse has been “sexually cleansed”⁷² and made free to remarry. Seeking to understand the kind of data that was produced by many anthropologists in the colonial era⁷³, Diane Lewis (1973) is critical. Lewis (1973: 582), in “Anthropology and Colonialism,” exposes the ills that anthropologists executed while in the field. She states, “The dominant political interests of the time not only blinded many anthropologists of the implications of their position, but also influenced them, apparently unconsciously, to justify the colonial system”. Burawoy (2014: 964) concurs with this fact stating that, “In those days there were no human subject protocols” – consequently, most often people did not even know that they were being studied. Thus, whatever would represent their views, and however the observer interpreted their worldviews, traditions, and so on. This begs the question to what extent such anthropologists’ interpretations fairly represented the *imbusa*, as the Bemba people told them. In fact, anthropologists had to ask permission from the colonial officials to enter the country in order to carry out their fieldwork as Lewis (1973: 582) enlightens. However, I still draw on these anthropologists’ works because they were the first to write on the Bemba people and they spent long years among the people learning the culture and language.

⁷² Among Bemba people, widow sexual cleansing is a ritual that is performed on both women and men (widow and widower) in order to rid them of the spirit of the dead spouse. It is an act of sexual intercourse (heterosexual) between a remaining spouse with his or her late spouse’s close relative. For the Bemba, a married sexual relationship only ends after this ritual is performed. If this ritual is not performed, the remaining spouse may die or become insane if he/she engages in sexual intercourse before being cleansed. However, the ritual is more pronounced for women than it is for men. Siwila (2011) and Lois Moyo (2007) have discussed the widow cleansing ritual in detail.

⁷³ This does not in any way suggest that the colonialists and anthropologists came to Africa in the same period or with the same intentions.

Mwakikagile (2010: 208) explains that the Copperbelt is home to various African nationalities such as the Nyakyusa of Tanzania and others from Malawi who became citizens of independent Zambia after Zambia attained independence. Mwakikagile (2010: 210) rightly notes that the “Copperbelt Province continues to be a laboratory for the continuing experiment in cultural and ethnic integration in the quest for a truly ‘One Zambia One Nation’.” Just as the *lingua franca* of the Copperbelt province goes beyond the Zambian borders and embraces other languages from other African countries as well as those from outside of Africa, even “sexualities” are a mix from other nationalities, as the colonial and Christian sexuality and lifestyle were imitated on the Copperbelt.

Lewis (1973: 582) and Burawoy (2014) write about how anthropologists were implicated in colonialism, since they were asked to give information and advice to the West concerning social, political and economic changes that they dealt with directly in an attempt to manipulate the indigenous Africans. There is awareness that some misrepresentations regarding initiation rites may be a result of language barriers as well. While most of the missionaries and anthropologists learnt the language of the communities they researched, there is a possibility of misunderstanding especially for a language like Bemba where certain words may have multiple meanings and interpretations. Rasing (1995, 2001) and Naomi Haynes (2012, 2013) have currently undertaken their empirical research among Roman Catholic women and Pentecostals on the Copperbelt province respectively.

Richards and Rasing have written extensively on the Bemba people and *imbusa/ichisungu* respectively. It is necessary, however, to question the representations of some of the anthropological interpretations that they have given if one follows Burawoy’s (2014: 964) arguments. Burawoy (2014: 964) explains what anthropologists had to do to gain access to study a community. As Burawoy (2014) asserts, collusion between anthropologists, colonisers and missionaries had dire consequences. Lévi-Strauss (1966: 126) is right in explaining, “...millions of innocent human beings have had their resources plundered and their institutions and beliefs destroyed” in the name of civilization.

There was a growing interest from colonial officials and missionaries in an attempt to learn, educate, civilize, enlighten and Christianise the Bemba people. Corbeil (1982: 12) states that the priests wanted to go into this space so that they would know what goes on and change it if it was contrary

to Christianity and in order for the priests to prepare notes for the new priests that would come to Bemba land. The indigenous Bemba men were not allowed into this space unless called upon, and yet foreign men demanded to be let into that space. It was a challenging situation for the Bemba people and they may have not disclosed all that *imbusa* is about because their wives teach Bemba men about *imbusa* teachings. As a result, the Bemba marriage worldview began to change on the Copperbelt especially. In “Making ‘Modern’ Marriage ‘Traditional’”, Ault (1983: 187) explains that Bemba men who had migrated from the rural Northern province to work on the copper mines began to call on their chiefs to come and intervene in their marriages as the women were divorcing one husband to marry another for economic reasons. Because the Copperbelt was in the hands of the colonisers, the Bemba chiefs had to seek permission from them to go and help “re-traditionalize” marriages. The colonial officials’ agreement to such requests were based on their own agenda of wanting to be in control of the men on the Copperbelt. Ault (1983: 182) explains that, “... chiefs increased the penalties imposed on women in marital cases and waged a vigorous campaign to stop them from leaving the village. Colonial officials also were keen on supporting this effort. They pressed transport companies to prohibit unaccompanied women travelling to town.”

The process of urban hybridity for Bemba people on the Copperbelt had already begun to take shape. The hybrid Bemba worldview that I term Town Bemba worldview (like its Town Bemba multilingual view), manifests as a fluid worldview because it is typically formed by diverse cultural traditions within the city, Christianity and the modern experience. These elements, as Spitulnik (1999: 33) has argued, “depend on the ideas of flux, hybridity, newness, and experimentation in the Zambian cultural context.” With this began the hybridization of Bemba marriages on the Copperbelt. It is also important to note that social positions, class locations, and cultural hybridization of the Bemba people on the Copperbelt began with regulations that were imposed by the colonial officials and missionaries, which contributed to the forming of what could be termed as ‘Town Bemba culture’. By 1939, the chiefs had appointed judges to represent various ethnic groups on the Copperbelt; these later formed recognised Urban African courts (Ault 1983:188). Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1922: 54) in his *How Natives Think* (which was written in French and was translated in 1995 by Albert Mosley) described Africans as being unable to construct abstract thoughts compared to the “civilized” West. These were the kind of thoughts and ideas that made the Western missionaries want to colonize *imbusa* and if possible be the ones to teach in the ritual. Levy-Bruhl

(1922) tapped into such patterns of thought about Africans of the time. Jay Ciaffa (2008: 121) has explained that colonialism disrupted Africans' cultural traditions and successfully imposed Western ways of social organisations. Yet, it seems that the hybridization on the Copperbelt has enriched *imbusa* despite the integration of colonial as well as elements from various cultures. This means that decolonising Town *imbusa* should not be understood as a search for a mono-definition but rather an attempt to liberate the ritual from colonially imposed patriarchal expression of the ritual as argued in chapter two. This research sought to uncover elements for the Town Bemba people of Copperbelt Zambia that can emphasise *imbusa* teaching for gender justice, equality and affirmation of rights for women and sexual minorities.

In postcolonial Africa, Ciaffa (2008: 126)⁷⁴ observes, there are some scholars who want precolonial culture revived and those who tend to overlook pre-colonial cultures. The Copperbelt's hybridity informs the worldview and understanding of marriage in a modern context. Despite attainment of independence, this Town Bemba worldview defines the ways of life and of being married, perspectives, images and systems of images, and interpretation of *imbusa* symbols. Yet the Town Bemba people's life remains intrinsically connected to ritual at every level from marriage, birth, puberty, death, employment, politics, war, social roles, religion, identity construction, etc. Oduyoye (1995b: 11)⁷⁵ explained that for African women, ritual is an aspect of their everyday life from birth to death. The various articles in the book *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, edited by Mercy Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, underscore the significance of ritual in African societies. They have argued that rituals are mainly performed on and for women; in certain cases, the ritual is often drawn upon to perpetuate patriarchal enforcement. Despite its entanglements and being coloured with patriarchy, ritual in Africa has a significant function of giving women an identity and status among their peers. This is true of the Bemba *imbusa* rite. This worldview is pervasive such that even women who have careers are often reminded in their work places, sometimes by fellow women but especially men, to do things as they were taught by their *banacimbusa* (The meaning of *nacimbusa* is a woman who is a ritual (liminal⁷⁶) guardian. The close interpretation is that *banacimbusa*

⁷⁴ See also Ghandi (1998: 4) and Friedman (1992).

⁷⁵ See also Tamale (2005: 9) on a similar discussion.

⁷⁶ Liminal refers to the time that an initiate spends in isolation being taught by older women. It is a period whereby the initiate is "between and betwixt," as they take on a liminal persona as noted by Turner (1969: 95). According to Kaunda (2015: 26), "The 'liminal personae' are neither living nor dead but both living and dead. This is the ambiguity of the anti-structural period. They are considered neither male nor female, deprived of rank, status and property."

are ritual tutors or experts in traditional Bemba marital wisdom). Kalusa and Vaughan (2013: xvi) have explained, “reforming sexual and marital practices was of course in itself a major ambition of the Christian missionaries in Africa”.

When missionaries and colonisers heard about Bemba women’s *imbusa* initiation rites and its focus on female power instead of male power, they feared that it was too dangerous and could hinder the progress of the Bemba males whom they targeted for enlightenment (Kalusa and Vaughan 2013: xv). The Bemba women tried to prevent missionaries and anthropologists as well as colonial officials from entering *imbusa* teaching space because no man, or uninitiated woman, was allowed where the ritual was taking place, unless they were invited. The missionaries gave all sorts of reasons ranging from wanting to “unpaganise” it, Christianise it or to prepare notes for those priests yet to come so that they would not be astonished (Corbeil 1982). Kenneth Omeje (2008: 98) argues, “African social fabrics are arbitrarily disfigured, unsettled and reconfigured to meet a complex of ‘extraverted interests’”; with the missionaries and colonial “masters”, this was the case as they tried to civilize the “uncivilized” African. Similarly, Oyeronke Oyewumi (2002: 5) explains that if interpreted out of context, African realities often result in “distortions, obfuscations in language and often a total lack of comprehension”. My argument is that while interaction and contact with other cultures affected the Bemba, it was not only negative impact; there are traces of positive impacts that the Bemba gained from other ethnic groups and races. The Town Bemba people are interpreted much in the same way as traditional Bemba people in the rural areas and hence, there have been many misinterpretations in the way Town Bemba are depicted. The Town Bemba people are not matrilocal⁷⁷ as is the case in the rural areas but neolocal⁷⁸, as typically the norm on the Copperbelt. This means that brides are not prepared to take their husbands to their mothers’ village but expect to live on their own, and often Town Bemba couples do not expect ever to return to their village⁷⁹. Douglas Kellner and Meenakshi Durham (2006: XXI) have explained, “Culture is produced and consumed within social life. Hence, particular cultural artefacts and practices must be situated within the social relations of production and reception in which culture is produced, distributed, and consumed in order to be properly understood and interpreted.” Similarly, Richard Bell (2002: 1)

⁷⁷ Matrilocal is when a groom moves to his wife’s village after marriage and lives there with his wife’s family.

⁷⁸ Neolocal in this sense means that both the wife and husband are not living with their families but in a neutral place where neither of their family live.

⁷⁹ Growing up in Chingola, I noticed that most families relocated to the Village when they retired.

notes, “the effort to see another’s world as it is, a particular aspect of African culture for example, when one is alien to that culture, poses several difficulties.” When one has understanding of another’s culture as it is, he/she may approach that culture better because they have a starting point, meaning they can reach a mutual understanding. *Imbusa* in its expression on the Copperbelt cannot be regarded as unaltered, monolithic and frozen in a Bemba past but has experienced transformation within the hybridized Town Bemba worldview of the Copperbelt. Coming into contact with other cultural traditional ways of performing the similar ritual means that Bemba culture learnt from as well as taught other cultures the Bemba *imbusa* rite. Joyce Maluleke (2012: 4) shows that “Contemporary African culture is a mixture of traditional elements and alien features.” This therefore, explains that Town *imbusa* in its contemporary form is a teaching with a mixture of various elements from within traditional cultures within the Copperbelt and colonial Christianity elements such as wifely submission and male headship, which were foreign elements to traditional Bemba worldviews.

Kapwepwe (1994: 50) has explained that *imbusa* in its traditional form was women’s marital teachings and men were never taught. However, on the Copperbelt, especially in certain Pentecostal traditions, there has been a call for men to undergo *imbusa* teaching of their own with *bashichimbusa* (male tutors) (see chapter five and six). Town *imbusa* teachings are mainly focused on the relationship between husband and wife with an emphasis on marital sex. The *imbusa* teaching space is a safe space for sexual and reproductive health discussions among Bemba women. This is in contrast to the traditional Bemba *imbusa* that included other courses such as politics, religion and so on (Hinfelaar 1994). The Town Bemba focuses mainly on demonstrations of how the “act of marriage” is performed as it is presumed that the bride is a virgin and needs to be taught the art of intimacy by older women. There is a saying that follows this: *ukufunda umwana kufikapo* (to teach a child one has to hit the nail on the head and not beat about the bush). Other aspects of the teaching include how to care for in-laws, although the teaching on romance and intimacy in a marriage is priority. The Bemba traditional school of *imbusa* lasted six months⁸⁰ and it had broad aspects of teachings ranging from teaching a woman her position as priestess of her home, the Bemba people’s worldview, their

origin, the community's notion of the Supreme Being, Bemba political thought, to the human predicament (Hinfelaar 1994:2-11). This was part of the *imbusa* curriculum. The teachings involved much more than that cited above, but also included the main module on the bedroom and intimacy. It is important to concisely deal with the traditional worldview to understand how it functioned and the extent to which it has been retained within Town *imbusa*.

4.2. Traditional Bemba Worldview: Origin and Destiny

Bemba people's origin has been traced to Angola and Congo (Hinfelaar 1994:3-6 and Brelsford 1950: 31). During the fifteenth century, movements of Luba-Lunda nations, Hinfelaar (1994: 3) explain, the nations moved from the West to the East. It is the Bemba's' belief that the East is a place of peace and security, signifying hope and where they can meet God. Bemba people have claimed to come from Angola in the west. For the Bemba, the west denotes the past and is associated with darkness and bad luck. Even at the initiation ceremony of *icisungu* and *imbusa*, girls are told to face *kukabanga* (the east) at the beginning of the ceremony as the *nacimbusa* says prayers. By facing *kukabanga* (east), the *young bride* taps into the infinite supply of the blessing and ever-flowing life from *Mayo Tata Lesa* (Mother Father God) by doing that she is assured of happiness and fulfilled life as the priestess of her home (Hinfelaar 1994: 13-18; Kaunda 2010: 7). The Bemba believe that they came from *kumasamba* (west) which is associated with the past and misfortune, and they are going *kukabanga* (east) which they associate with future and blessings because that is where *Lesa* (God) dwells. This is important because unlike some African theologians such as John Mbiti (1997: 25) who has argued that Africans have a long past and little or no future at all, Bemba people are future-oriented (Mupeta 2014: 24), and they believe that they are still moving towards the fullness of life in God. Even their dead are buried facing *kwaLesa* (east) so that the first thing they would do is to see *Lesa* in fullness. *Imbusa* teaching is one of those crucial things that they do in obedience to the commands of God *Lesa* in their journey to *kumutebeto wa kwaLesa* (feast of God in blessed east land). Through *imbusa*, *nacimbusa* is empowered as the source to beseech the God of the east. This means invoking the God of the future, at the beginning of the *Chisungu* (girls' initiation) ceremony to show that people still hold on to God's directives. This ceremony prepares girls for marriage as they move

from childhood into adulthood. *Lesa* (God) is central⁸¹ to the *imbusa* as the Bemba believe that *Lesa* has given them the ability to teach and learn their sacred role as priestesses in their homes. Hinfelaar (1991: 120) also points out that Lenshina Mulenga, the first Bemba woman to establish a church called the Lumpa Church during the colonial era, also used some symbolism from *imbusa* that pointed to the journey from the West, which the Bemba associate with bad things, to the East where they will meet with *Lesa* and have better lives. According to Richards (1956: 121), *banacimbusa* seem to believe that they supernaturally assist the bride to grow from a girl to woman during the *imbusa* teachings. There is however, no magical or supernatural assumption by the Bemba that grows the girls into women, as Richards⁸² would have us believe. The Bemba people believe that the knowledge the girls acquire from the teachings of *imbusa* and *icisungu* is what transforms them into women, it is the wisdom and knowledge given to young brides that transforms them into women, as Mupeta (2014: 32-33) shows. Nevertheless, it is true that the Bemba women involve *Lesa* in the whole process of the rite, so that *Lesa* can guide them as they undertake the important task of teaching the young brides their roles as married women. As priestesses of their homes, Bemba women were taught religious dimensions of their roles as married women in pre-colonial times. With the colonial reshuffling of Bemba cultural gender norms, men became the religious leaders to the extent that up to now women are still trying to find their voice and place as pastors (Hinfelaar 1994, and Kaunda, 2010: 7). This is one of the reasons that Lenshina Mulenga revolted against the Church of Scotland (Hinfelaar, 1991: 103, Kaunda and Nadar, 2012) and formed her own indigenous church. Similarly, Rasing (2001: 28) observes that what made Bemba women ‘invisible’ was not *imbusa* but rather the implementation of colonial rule and Christianity. In this sense, colonising *imbusa* led to colonisation of its curriculum and henceforth, it was taught according to content agreed on by colonial officials and missionaries. It is important to clarify that precolonial Bemba social structure was based on matrilineal, matrilineal and monogamous structures, with a well-entrenched matriclan system of organisation. In this system, gender roles were not fixed, but flexible and fluid; a female could assume a male role and a male could assume a female role (Poewe, 1981: 9-10). The colonialists and white fathers, who did mission work among the Bemba people in colonial Zambia, saw Bemba sexuality and rites surrounding it, such as *amafunde yambusa*, as repulsive,

⁸¹ For detailed discussion on the centrality of *Lesa* in *imbusa* teachings see Richards (1956) and (1982); Maxwell (1983: 88); Hinfelaar (1994); Kaunda (2013).

⁸² Richards (1982) explained that *banacimbusa* believed they were supernaturally growing the brides from being girls into women.

primitive and classified as *ifyacisenshi* (heathen practices) (Rasing 2001, Kapwepwe, 1994: 145; see Kaunda, 2010; Hinfelaar, 1994).

Imbusa teachings are a secret and have coded multiple meanings that are only revealed to initiated women; even Bemba men are not allowed in the teaching space except for a brief appearance when summoned by *nachimbusa*. This means that when missionaries, anthropologists and colonialists sought to get information from the Bemba women, it is possible that most of the meanings they were given are general interpretations because the teachings are coded and have double or multiple meanings – the general meaning and the one understood by the initiated only. The Bemba would have been protecting their heritage and cultural beliefs and the men (missionaries and colonialists) had invaded their space. In the next section, I will show the positions that Bemba women held in the precolonial era and how these positions were part of the teachings of *imbusa*, which, it can be argued, are no longer part of the curriculum currently, or may have taken on a different interpretation especially for the Town Bemba on the Copperbelt. As shown in chapter two, Bemba culture and values may have been impacted by other cultures they encountered. Indeed as Tamale (2014: 150) has argued, “Our historical and colonial legacy of pluralistic legal systems and multi-religious traditions holds both advantages and disadvantages.” Poewe (1981) has given a detailed discussion on gender roles and Luapula women’s political involvement.

4.3. Bemba Women and Political Power

Political and economic values were taught at initiation rites in the 1930s, according to Richards (1956: V). Poewe (1981: 105) explains that Luapula women took part in political affairs as they had decision-making roles concerning the clan, and further notes that Luapulans used to have female chiefs Poewe (1981: 108). Lenshina Mulenga’s⁸³ revolt against colonial religion was seen as a political action as well not only by the colonialists, but by indigenous Zambians as well (Hinfelaar 1994).⁸⁴ Bemba women’s political power was taught at initiation rites and *nachimbusa* had a great deal of political power. Rasing (2004: 284) refers to a *nachimbusa* that used her political authority to order

⁸³ Lenshina Mulenga broke away from the Church of Scotland and started her own known as the Lumpa church.

⁸⁴ See also Kaunda and Nadar (2012: 348).

one European priest to leave the country of Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia) in the 1950s because he was believed to have too much information about the *imbusa* rite. Kamini and Mulenga (2004: 3) have stressed that the colonial era saw Bemba women lose political, religious and economic status. As the men became migrant labour for the British in the copper industry, much of the political, religious and economic power was now handed to the men. Rasing (2004: 284) succinctly argues that women have since been denied political power after the contact with Christianity.

Kapembwa Lumbwe (2004: XV) referred to contact with Christianity and interactions with other cultures in Zambia as a reason for the changes in marriage practices among the Bemba people. While there are some changes in marriage practices, nonetheless, the Bemba still perform marriage rites such as *imbusa*. Much of the teachings have remained unchanged in *imbusa*. Christine Mushibwe (2009: 103) believes that “The rural area, however, remains the location of most cultural traditions and seems to remain unaffected by the development” from Western contact; *imbusa* teachings remains resilient with few changes even in cities like Chingola on the Copperbelt province of Zambia despite all the contact with outside cultures. Contact changed marriage practices among the Bemba, but *imbusa* remains, and many teachings are unchanged (especially in rural areas). It might seem unchanged but contact with other cultures and Christianity changed it. However, it must be noted, as Benezet Bujo (2009: 48) has explained, that besides colonial politics and the economic situation, Christianity played a major role in changes to African culture (*imbusa* teachings) as the church tried by all means to redefine African lifestyles, worldviews and so on. As a result, the white male and uninitiated white women invaded Bemba women’s safe spaces of solidarity. Alistair and Larmer (2010:4) have argued “very profound changes occurred in social lives and structures on the Copperbelt” with movements from peoples’ known communities into new ones. Rasing has written extensively on the Bemba *imbusa* teachings. In a paper presented at the Fenza conference, Rasing (2010: 4) notes that the British law allowed husbands to “beat their wives with a stick, while in traditional marriage the husband is obliged to look after his wife properly and treat her properly. E.g. the Bemba song in the wedding ceremony: if you do not look after my daughter well, I will get manes like a lion, meaning: I will do something bad to you.) (*pa mwana wandi nkamena amasense kamena amasense nkaba nkalamo*)”. This is similar to the Zulu song the bride’s sisters will sing to the groom; “*Wesibali hayi Wesibali mbuyisele ekhaya Ungambulali Ungamushayi Umekwehlula mbuyiseleakhaya* Brother in law, bring her home. Don’t kill her, Don’t hit her. If you can’t manage her, Bring her home” (Phiri

and Nadar, 2009: 15). Rasing's (2010: 4) point that the British allowed a husband to beat the wife with a stick is ambiguous though because she has not stated whether this law was for the Zambian men or the British men themselves. Was this law meant to keep the Bemba/Zambian women in "their place" by the British or to keep them from following their husbands into the city? Alternatively, was this law meant for the British wives? (Rasing 2010). These are some reasons that led to changes in Bemba and Zambian culture. Mushibwe (2009: 118)⁸⁵ asserts that the "missionaries advocated for western ways of life thereby extirpating the indigenous culture of the local people".

Joyce Maluleke (2012: 4), an advocate of the high court in South Africa, like aforementioned scholars, has alluded to the fact that African culture has not remained static; mixing with other cultures has changed some aspects of African culture. This is true of all cultures; contact with a different culture inevitably causes the other culture to rethink their culture intentionally/unintentionally. For instance, the content of *amafunde* used to teach *imbasa* has not remained unchanged, and has adopted some aspects from different cultures.

Contact of Bemba culture with other cultures, a matrilineal society that encouraged women's political and leadership decision-making has become so patriarchal that a woman's voice cannot be heard. For Bemba people, hard work was encouraged for both husband and wife for the social transformation and development of humanity and society (Kapwepwe 1994: 96-97)⁸⁶. In his own words Kapwepwe (1994:97-98) states that "*umwanakashi afwile ukutemwa imilimo...umwaume nao ekwata ubufuba ubwampelwa-maano ico umukashi alekwila eco ufwile ukwebaulwafye pee. Ngefintu uleya kubacende bobee teekuncito iyoo.*" This is translated as "a woman should love working... and a man should not have unfounded jealousy because his wife is working, which will lead him to accuse his wife of going out to meet with other men and not going to work". In pre-colonial times, women would cultivate the land in order to produce for the family while the men would hunt; later in postcolonial times this women are obtaining education and holding careers as a way for them to provide for their families. It was interesting to find out how *banacimbasa* encourage Bemba women to pursue career positions in public spaces. This does not in any way mean that all Bemba women have been to universities and are career women.

⁸⁵ See also Rasing (1995).

⁸⁶ See also Kaunda and Kaunda (2013: 11).

For Mushibwe (2009:101), traditional initiation rites for women have been a major contributing factor to women's illiteracy in Zambia, however, according to Kapwepwe (1994: 50), Bemba women were taught responsibility and hard work in providing for their families in *imbusa* teachings. This difference in views between Kapwepwe and Mushibwe begs a question, is it because Mushibwe is a woman and Kapwepwe a man or is it because Kapwepwe is a Bemba and Mushibwe a Tumbuka speaking woman? Why is there such a difference in their views? Jonathan Friedman (1992:837) asserts that people's realities are formed out of specific socio-historic contexts that should be taken into account when interpreting a culture different from one's own. It is also interesting to look at *imbusa* in its socio-historic context and note whether it meant something else from what it means today. Friedman (1992:842) alludes to this fact that "the interaction between locally specific practices of selfhood and the dynamics of global positioning" formulates a cultural hybridity. Kamini and Mulenga (2004: 2) have shown that there is little documentation of pre-colonial histories. Friedman (1992: 845) has asserted that Hawaiians for example have denied a culture forged by outsiders, formulate a new culture from the present, and forget the past culture while Greeks have used the past interpreted by outsiders to forge a present and viable future. This shows the dynamism of culture that culture changes and adapts according to the times. In fact, Kapwepwe (1994) succinctly demonstrates that marriage does not change; it is people and time that changes. This means that for the Bemba people marriage is always the same but what changes is the way the two people live out their marriage and *amafunde yambusa*. When a person or people change, even their beliefs change according to the time and space that they live in. This is the reason *imbusa* seem to have taken a different turn postcolonially. In his thesis titled, "Traditional Cultural Practices of imparting Sex Education and the Fight Against HIV/AIDS: The Case of Initiation Ceremonies for Girls in Zambia," Augustus Kapungwe (2003:37) records that university students showed a desire to undergo *imbusa* teachings at the time of their marriage, and this shows *imbusa* rite's persistence in Zambia.

4.4. Bemba Women and Economic Autonomy and Responsibility

Kapwepwe (1994: 51) has noted that Bemba men were not the only providers in the home. Women had that responsibility too. During *imbusa* teachings, women were educated to take up "careers" as

providers for their families. Richards (1982:26) has explained that Bemba women were responsible for the production and control of food supplies. Bemba women became conversant with the forest as a source of their food supplies, without which they would struggle (Richards 1982: 26). This was taught as an *imbusa* rite. In an urban space like Chingola currently, women have taken up careers and are family breadwinners.

Women among the Bemba were admired and honoured for their industry and assertiveness (Richards, 1982: 48; see also Rasing, 1995). Being a matrilineal people (which means that the family descent is from Bemba women), this privileged the woman to own the land and family properties. This means that after marriage, the Bemba man moved to the woman's village or community (Richards 1982, Chondoka 2001, Rasing 1995). Poewe (1981: IV) explains better when she asserts that matrilineal people follow a sexual parallelism pattern that is different from the central "relationship of dominance-dependence that characterize the West". With matrilineity among the Bemba, women and men made a living without one depending completely on the other. Being matrilineal has its own challenges in that a father cannot give a legacy to his children because culturally, he should give to his sisters' children. Women and their children knew this fact and they used to work for themselves and hire other people to work for them if there was a need. Poewe (1981: 16) in this sense suggest, "the limits within which it is possible that matrilineal distribution may correspond to the development of the individualistic productive forces to which matrilineity in an industrializing context has given birth". However, all this changed when the Bemba men became hired labour on the Copperbelt and women were not allowed to work in the mines, least of all come to the Copperbelt (Ault 1983: 183).

Bemba women, Ault (1983:185) notes, migrating from rural to urban areas found that they had no place to be providers for their families like they did in the rural areas because the colonisers only wanted men to work in the mines on the Copperbelt; and this was the beginning of women's dependency on their husbands economically. Rasing (2004: 284) states that Bemba women were not dependent on their husbands. They instead worked to provide for their family. Similarly, Oduyoye (1995:7) talks of Akan women as economically independent as a matrilineal society. She explains how Akan women worked from "farming, trading, or processing to selling food and other necessities" (Oduyoye, 1995: 7; Poewe, 1981). This is also true of the Bemba women in Zambia,

they worked the land and produced for their families' wellbeing. Oduyoye (1995: 7) adds that marriage only added responsibilities for women as they already had other responsibilities. Maxwell (1983: 96) also explains that during the *imbusa* rite the initiates were made to lie down, their heads on the planted seed of sorghum and millet which symbolised them being providers of their families as sorghum and millet are the staple food of the Bemba.

Elizabeth Schmidt (1992) is an historian, who comments on anthropologists and sociologists for failure to focus on African women in Zimbabwean history. She argues that over four decade of writing history on Zimbabwe and the fact that Zimbabweans have progressively shifted in emphasis on colonialism, nevertheless the 'centrality' of women in history lags behind in comparative to other African countries.

Her (1992: 1) central argument is that “The structures of women's subordination in both the domestic and social spheres are negotiated, disputed and transformed over time. Hence, the household is a terrain of struggle, manifest in disputes over the allocation of labor, control over female reproduction, the distribution of resources, etc., the outcome of which helps to shape the broader society, as the household in turn is shaped by those broader social forces.”

Schmidt (1992) argues that the colonial capitalist invasion transformed not only indigenous economic structures, but also negatively affected social position of women and the relations in turn shaped the form of capitalism that emerged. While Schmidt is writing in patrilineal context, the argument is similar to how the domestic structures were altered among Bemba people of Zambia, colonialism promoted patriarchal system, which was perceived as more productive to economic development.

The change that came with colonialism had far-reaching consequences for women especially. By 1981 when Poewe (1981: 16) was writing, she noted, “while Zambian leaders claim that their socialism has its roots in African familism, they fail to recognize that this distribution is not underpinned on communal labor”. In short, Bemba people valued autonomy of individuals in production or economic terms even while they worked communally, since as mentioned earlier, every adult (woman and man) was supposed to earn a living. Postcolonial Bemba, like many other African societies, saw girls and women receiving less or no education at all for various reasons while

men enjoyed education and became empowered, which directly led to women being economically dependent on men fathers, uncles, cousins, brothers and husbands. Ousseina Alidou (2005: 12) is right in asserting, “the ideology of men as breadwinners is a legacy of European gender ideology about work with wage outside the home”. Bemba women who had “careers” in the village were faced with difficulty when they migrated to the Copperbelt, as the colonial officials were not employing women. Bemba women had to begin to depend on their male relatives (husband, brother, uncle etc.) which changed dynamics for them. Most, if not all African societies are still struggling with empowering women and giving them economic autonomy.

For the Bemba people, while men were leaving their communities to go and work in the mines as hired labour, women remained at home to raise families. Raising family, which used to be a combined effort of spouses, lay squarely on the shoulders of the woman during the colonial era. Kapwepwe (1994: 147) explains that in the same way that raising children is a woman’s responsibility, even the nation falls on women because a woman is a shepherd par excellence. This means that Bemba women were respected as they were perceived as leaders of the community, religious sphere and nation, that is why they needed to be schooled in the way they were to lead not just their homes, but their communities and religious spheres as well. Alidou (2005: 13) explains how the men in Niger became increasingly patriarchal as they were losing jobs due to the collapse of the uranium market around the mid-1980s. With the loss of jobs came the sense and realization that women may begin to be empowered and provide for families, hence, men began desperately to formulate an ideal “married Niger woman.” For Bemba people, the men acquiring jobs as mineworkers on the Copperbelt meant that women were marginalised in all matters of economy, politics and decision-making.

Andrew Roberts (1973: 30) has cautioned that Bemba people under the age of fifty have learnt their history directly or indirectly from the accounts recorded by the white fathers (Catholic priests) who were the missionaries among the Bemba people of Zambia. This means that much of what is called Bemba culture in postcolonial Zambia, has been influenced one way or another by the written interpretation of what used to be Bemba culture in pre and colonial eras since the Bemba are an oral centered group of people, like most African societies. Even *imbusa* teachings were and are still transmitted orally that is why they had visual aids and songs for every aspect of the teaching. This

means that the transmission of *imbusa* (for this study) is not without the taint of Western missionaries,' anthropologists' and colonialists' interpretations of the rite. Therefore, the question this raises is whether the *imbusa* teachings' content currently, is as it was in pre-colonial era. The *imbusa* teaching was in the hands of Bemba women. Anthropologists were interested to know what goes on in *imbusa* space and so they researched the Bemba people and marriage. Colonialists and missionaries also had interests of the *imbusa* teachings. This demonstrates why Bemba women as guardians of *imbusa* teachings did not want the lessons to be written down for fear that they would lose control. The teaching would exist in a different form (written) and not original oral. On the other hand, Bemba people can refer to written work and compare with the oral *imbusa* teaching and draw a distinction or learn what is true or not true of pre-colonial *imbusa*. Newell Booth (1978: 87) writing on the Baluba of Congo, contends that if tradition is accepted by and passed on by an elder regardless of its source, then it becomes tradition because elders are the ones who pass on and hand down tradition.. Women who were taught to be responsible in providing for their families are currently told that the man is the provider in a home and a woman has to respect that.

4.5. Bemba Women's Sexuality

While this study is generally concerned with understanding Bemba women's negotiation of *imbusa* teachings in their homes and their work place, one cannot talk about *imbusa* without touching on sexuality, which is the core component of *imbusa* teaching. Sexuality plays a significant and strategic role among the Bemba people. In the Bemba thought system, sexuality is essential for human health, and physical, mental, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing of women and men. From a young age, Bemba women were told/taught to elongate their labia minora, to bring about sexual pleasure for both spouses as well as make childbirth easy.⁸⁷ Traditionally, these are teachings that are meant for heterosexual relationships only because in Zambia, officially and legally, there has never been same sex marriage. The constitution of Zambia (Amendment) (2016: 13) explicitly states that "A person who is nineteen years of age or older has the right to choose a spouse of the opposite sex and marry." Nonetheless, *imbusa* space seems to have room that can be used to include 'sexual minorities'⁸⁸ as the ritual itself is dynamic⁸⁹ and fluid. Women pretend to be men⁹⁰ when they

⁸⁷ For a detailed discussion on this, see Rasing (2004, 2001).

⁸⁸ Sexual minorities are those whose sexual identity is other than heterosexual.

teach young brides, they make “symbolic” penises when teaching a bride sexual positions and the ritual of cleaning each other after every act of sexual intercourse with her husband. *Banacimbusa* would play out “men’s sexuality by symbolically playing men’s sexual acts” as noted by Patrick Mumbi (2011: 4). These actions can allow for non-heterosexual women to be welcomed in the space of *imbusa* teachings; if non-heterosexual women were in this *imbusa* space, it means they had not declared themselves as such because as explained above, *imbusa* space was and is exclusive only to married⁹¹ women and the brides being taught. During *imbusa* rites, a woman’s genitals as well as a man’s are explicitly discussed because it is a space where women are free to talk about sexuality. In order to bring a young bride to the awareness of what her life will be as a married woman, women talk freely of these human body parts. Haynes (2013: 1) observed that there is openness in the way *amafunde* are performed today on the Copperbelt, in contrast to the past when there was obscurity in communication.

“Among the Bemba people, sex is an important component of the traditional fabric, therefore sex education is a lifelong-learning process” that begins early in childhood as noted by Kaunda and Kaunda (2016: 160). *Imbusa* has however, been a space where women’s solidarity intertwines with open speech and women talk freely about sex that is usually taboo between old and young people. This is a reason why missionaries in Zambia (Africa) wanted to Christianise the rite – because they thought the Bemba (African) women were foul-mouthed and they misunderstood the *imbusa* teaching space for a public space. *Imbusa* is a private and secret space exclusive to Bemba women. Bemba women have mastered the art of passing on indigenous sexual knowledge for years as a celebration of the divine gift of female sexuality (Hinfelaar, 1994).

Imbusa is a secret space in the sense that only those invited can attend the teaching going on. However, this does not mean that people are unaware of this space, or what goes on in the space. I, for example, knew about the *imbusa* space when I was in primary school and by the time I was in high school I was a bit knowledgeable of what goes on in that space. The entire community knows

⁸⁹ For a detailed discussion on this, see Kaunda and Kaunda (2016).

⁹⁰ I am aware that this can be considered and probably rejected as an essentialist view by theorists such as Judith Butler. However, the *imbusa* space is a real space with women sharing secrets. As a female only space and as explicitly as they delve into sexual issues, it can be utilized as a space for the inclusion of same sex persons. While it is a space for heterosexual women, it can be utilized intentionally for the inclusion of sexual minorities.

⁹¹ Women who were known to be married; marriage in Zambia is still perceived to be between a man and a woman

about the *imbusa* rite, except only the initiated and those being initiated can be allowed into this secret space during initiation.

African women are often presented as ever at the mercy of their spouses, however, Hinfelaar (1994:14) (see also Richards, 1982: 12) shows that Bemba women owned their sexuality and, for example, could decide when sexual relations could take place in the home. Hinfelaar (1994: 13) explains that the wife would take charge of the couple's sexual life and she was "regarded as the main celebrant of the marital act and was held responsible for the proper performance of the ritual." The proper performance of ritual included the fact that should either wife or husband have been involved in extra marital affairs, they needed to confess before they could resume intercourse and this confession was initiated by the woman or a man if he suspected his spouse of infidelity. Usually women initiate discussions in the home/family among the Bemba.

Within current *imbusa* teachings on the Copperbelt province, women are taught that *ubuchende bwa mwaume tabutoba ing'anda* a man's infidelity cannot destroy a home (marriage), as I demonstrated elsewhere (Kaunda 2013: 42). Whenever a wife suspected her husband of infidelity, according to Hinfelaar (1994:11) she had every right to deny her husband sex until she was satisfied that either he was not having extra marital affairs or he confessed that he was unfaithful upon which there was a cleansing ritual which could only be performed by a married couple. Therefore, husband and wife depended on each other for confession and cleansing after betrayal or marriage breach by either of them. Today, however, women are taught in the same *imbusa* to give their husbands sex no matter what and not to nag him with questions of his whereabouts. Even when a woman knows of her husband's infidelity, she still gives in to sex in order to save the marriage. Kapwepwe (1994:50-51) emphasises that wife and husband need to be faithful to each other. This challenges what most women are taught during the *imbusa* rite that *ubuchende bwa mwaume tabutoba ng'anda* (a man's extra marital affairs cannot destroy a home/marriage). The reason Kapwepwe has 'softened the blow' on how he has presented the way Bemba men are expected to behave in marriage could be emanating from his maleness; or, are women oppressing themselves by the above saying so that they stay in life-denying marriages? For whose benefit are they keeping these marriages? Similarly, Phiri and Nadar (2009: 6) have argued that marriage is a dangerous institution for African women because even when they have seen what the man they are marrying is capable of, they still marry and stay

married to him. For Bemba people, according to Kapwepwe (1994:33), marriage is the foundation of humanity and if a marriage is not respected, humanity is at the edge of destruction; and infidelity is one way in which a marriage is destroyed. In this way, a woman is empowered to know that she can decide to leave/divorce her husband due to his infidelity (Lumbwe 2004:108). Lumbwe (2004:86) has further revealed that if her husband disrespects a wife, she can divorce him.

Kapwepwe (1994: 49) has also shown that a woman should “submit” to her husband if he respects her. This means that a husband who has extra marital affairs does not respect his wife and such a wife should not submit and has a right to divorce him. Both Lumbwe and Kapwepwe are men could this be the reason they both write about women’s need to be respected. However, Kapwepwe was the second vice president of democratic Zambia, which means that he may have seen how women were treated in pre-colonial and colonial times and things were different after colonialism and migration from their communities into the city. The experiences of colonisation of the Bemba do not stand alone, other cultures experienced them as well, Friedman (1992:843) writes on the Hawaiians and explains that the Hawaiians’ only access to their own history concerning their culture “is via the Western and missionary Hawaiian texts of the past, or the synthetic works of modern anthropologists and/or archaeologists”. This is also similar to *imbusa* teachings that were folklorised by the West when they wrote the histories or their observations of initiation rites. *Imbusa* in its socio-historic context meant something else from what it means today because interpretations of this rite of passage have been tainted with various ethnic groups’ cultures as well as Western views.

A Bemba saying⁹² is often used in *imbusa* teachings to alert the young bride that as she enters into a new life as a married woman, she needs all the knowledge and wisdom from *banacimbusa* and other married women who have had experiences of both the teachings and marriage. By giving a young bride instruction for marriage, they are “preparing a fire that will not burn her” if she follows through with the instructions. Since a Bemba woman makes a home (Hinfelaar 1994), it is very important that she is taught and adequately prepared for the responsibility of being able to run affairs pertaining to home and marriage.

⁹² *umulilo uchingilile abakalamba taocha* (which means a fire that is protected by adults wont burn).

4.6. Conclusion

Since Bemba women were taught in *imbusa* not to be idle but rather to work the land to provide for their families, this study sought to demonstrate the extent to which Bemba women on the Copperbelt Province are being taught to take up careers during *imbusa* teachings that are a very important aspect of Bemba women's lives. This is discussed thoroughly in chapter seven and eight where feedback from fieldwork is analysed. *Imbusa* teachings are a space or school for preparation of young brides. However, having Western culture during the colonial era, anthropologists, colonialists and missionaries as well as other cultures from various ethnic groups within Zambia and Africa played a role in the changes that have taken place in *imbusa*. Women that were once perceived as priestesses of their homes and initiators of prayers, among many other responsibilities, are now at the mercy of men. The migration from communities in the village where the families were close knit meant that men became "hired labour" on the Copperbelt and women remained taking care of their families. When women decided to go to the urban areas, the chiefs and colonial "masters" began to monitor women's movements and began issuing penalties for women who followed their husbands to the city unaccompanied by men. These sanctions brought about changes in the way women were treated; it filtered through *imbusa* because this was a school where women learnt how to live as women. I have intentionally described the Bemba people's worldview and origin in order that their history is documented. Thereafter, I also focused on women's teachings on their sexuality during initiation. Sexuality is a very important aspect of *imbusa* teachings and cannot be ignored in a study of this nature.

The following chapter introduces the *imbusa* curriculum as it is currently taught in Zambia, drawing from the writings of the earliest anthropologists as well as current literature on the phenomenon.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMBUSA TRADITIONAL CURRICULUM OF THE BEMBA PEOPLE OF ZAMBIA

Christianity and nationalist modernization had been devouring the ancient culture like a plague – a plague full of the best intentions but in fact the agent of tragic destruction – Edith Turner (1987: 62)

5.0. Introduction

Like the quote above from Turner, scholars⁹³ have been arguing that rites have changed over time in Africa. A number of factors have contributed to these changes – such as Christianity, modernization and colonialism just to mention a few. In this chapter, I discuss the Bemba *imbusa* curriculum taught in the 1930s, as observed by Richards. Although some content of this teaching has evolved over time, much of the teaching's performance remains as it was during the time that Richards witnessed it. I draw largely from Richards' recorded account of the *icisungu* from the 1930s. Some ethnic groups within Zambia focus on initiation rites for men, other ethnicities like the Ndembu, Lunda and Luvala of North Western Zambia have rites for both men and women, while for the Bemba the rites of passage are focused specifically on women and there are no initiation rites for boys and men. Among the Bemba, it is a woman who makes a home, it is imperative that she gets instruction into that institution. Thus, a Bemba woman receives extensive and thorough instruction on sexuality and how she, as a woman, should take charge of that aspect of her marriage to ensure that she and her husband get sexual pleasure while they pleasure each other. This chapter focuses on the traditional *imbusa* curriculum and how it is currently taught and is divided into three sections; first, I will present the Bemba women's position in society, second, Bemba women's sexuality; and third, the traditional *imbusa* curriculum.

⁹³ See for instance Rasing (2010); Haynes (2013).

Before delving into the Bemba women's position, I will briefly discuss the curriculum. *Imbusa* or *icisungu* is known as a teaching⁹⁴ such that, it has a particular content regarding women's wellbeing and responsibility in society. Most, if not all African societies are known as societies that transmit cultural information and traditions orally. *Imbusa* teachings are also passed on orally; it was not until the 1930s that Richards began writing on these women's secrets. These are secrets (like Baganda women's secrets as explains Tamale (2005) that Bemba women guarded and were only taught to those who were about to get married. While particular aspects of the *imbusa/icisungu* teaching are known to young people in high schools, the coded message is only revealed as one is about to get married. The *imbusa* teachings have coded and multiple messages, hence the true meaning of a teaching during *imbusa* is only encoded to an initiate by *nacimbusa*. Kapwepwe (1994: 48) explains that “*abaana abaume tababakwatile akashita ngifihya bakwatile abakashana, balesambilila ubwiminine*”; this is translated as, ‘boys or young men learnt from everyone in the community (informally) because their teachings were not organized and they were not accorded as much time as Bemba girls and women were’. Kapwepwe (1994: 49) further reveals that *abakashana bena balikwete ishuko ukucila abalumendo pantu balikwete nensukulu uko balefundwa ngababengisha icisungu pamyenshi mutanda; shino nshiku bachita imyenshi itatu nangu ibili. Amafunde balepeelwa fwebaume bala tufisa, mafunde yabana mayo abene*. This is translated as ‘girls had more privilege than boys because they had a school where they were taught in seclusion for six months which currently has been reduced to two or three months. The lessons they receive are hidden from us as men, they are women's secret lessons’. This explanation by Kapwepwe of *amafunde yambusa* suggests that there is a curriculum (written or unwritten) if there are lessons/instructions/teachings being presented to young brides, or at least that there are steps followed in the teaching of *imbusa*.

Richards (1982: 63) argues that the girls/initiates/students are “obliged to remain silent, often covered in blankets, seem to lose all personality for the observer... They are both the centers of the ceremony and yet the least interesting of the actors in it.” To a non-Bemba observer, it may seem as Richards describes, that the brides are the least interesting during the ceremony, the girls are seated with *nakalamba* the entire time explaining to them what is going on and the meaning of every action. I also argue that respect for the Bemba people means that a young person cannot look an adult in

⁹⁴ Scholars who have researched *imbusa* and other initiation rites also refer to it as a teaching; see for instance Richards [1956] (1982); Turner (1987); Rasing (2001); Mushibwe (2009); Kaunda (2013); Haynes (2012, 2013); Mupeta (2014).

the eyes like in the Western worldview. A young person who looks adults in the eyes is perceived as arrogant. That is why during *imbusa* teachings; girls would lower their gaze if they were not covered in blankets. Second, being covered in blankets is a symbolic act of being cocooned and when the teachings are over; they bloom and come out of their cocoon as adults. An observer like Richards would not have access to knowledge of what they do with the teaching they receive; this is why I have focussed on the impact of *imbusa* teachings on Bemba women. This study therefore seeks to present *imbusa* teachings as a curriculum in the format of a course outline⁹⁵ and in this chapter; I have presented the Bemba *imbusa* traditional curriculum as it is currently taught.

For a home to be complete among the Bemba, a woman was vital. In fact, discussions and decisions were initiated by women in families and communities. Women's positions in their homes and communities were significant and important.

5.1. Bemba Women's Position in Society

For Bemba people, a woman was perceived as a custodian of Bemba culture/tradition and she was given the responsibility to transfer this culture/tradition to young women during their initiation rite of *icisungu*. This then implies that women had to stand in solidarity in order to pass on this culture/tradition; every married woman who had undergone *imbusa* teachings was welcome to the teaching space and they would have an opportunity to present a teaching through songs as well. Men and uninitiated women were and still are excluded from the *imbusa* teaching space unless called upon to perform a specific task. Poewe (1981) has critically written on the Luapulan women and their position in society. Poewe (1981: 24) argues, "Each sex predominantly controls one major resource. Without this separate and parallel control Luapulan⁹⁶ women would have been subordinate to men." Poewe (1981: 28) further explained, "In my own research, among the matrilineal Luapula however, I observed that women play an equally central role in economic and political affairs of the society.

⁹⁵ The idea to present *imbusa* as a course outline was suggested by my supervisor Prof Sarojini Nadar during a discussion of this dissertation.

⁹⁶ The Bemba people are found in Northern, Luapula, Muchinga provinces of Zambia (these include subsets of Bemba such as because they share they share most values and beliefs. I therefore, employ Bemba people to include the following communities: Bisa, Ila, Lamba, Chishinga, Tabwa, Ushi, Mukulo, lala, and the Lunda).

Consequently, the assumption of universal male dominance is in need of re-examination.” Poewe’s argument implies that with matrilineal people, women had decision-making power in political and economic issues just as much as the Bemba men. Bemba women had what is equivalent to careers⁹⁷ in the fields as they worked on the land, even though they had no education, they were able to provide for their families. The question is: to what extent have Copperbelt *imbusa* reconceptualised career for married women? Poewe (1981: 33) clarifies that “the favourable position enjoyed by Luapulan women vis-à-vis control over resources owes much to three factors; female control over reproduction, female control over critical resources and matrilineal ideology reinforcing the cultural and structural centrality of women.” This explanation demonstrates that Bemba women’s decision-making power stretched from politics and reproduction to economy and lineage. The positions that these women held were not in private domestic spheres only, they held decision-making power in public economic and political spheres as well. Similarly, Kapwepwe (1994: 47) explains that “*icishibilo icilanga ukukakana kwa cuupo libende no mwinshi. Ici calola mukutula ibende lyeka-lyeka tekuti litwe akantu nelyo kamo, ifyo fine no mwinshi tekuti utwe akantu ukwabula ibende. Ici ekutula mucuupo umwaume no mwanakashi balinga ukubombela pamo akashita konsefye pakuti icuupo cifumaluke nokuba icituntulu.*” (Translated as ‘what symbolises the marriage tie is a mortar and a pestle, this means a mortar by itself cannot grind, and similarly, the pestle on its own cannot accomplish grinding without the mortar.’ This means that a man and a woman need to work together in marriage all the time for the marriage to be fulfilling). The position of matrilineal people such as the Bemba, according to Poewe (1981) and Kapwepwe (1994), is that women had decision-making power in both the private and public spheres. Hinfelaar (1994) similarly explains that Bemba women had position of power; he further demonstrates that due to the three major roles Bemba women held in society, they inevitably had these positions in society. These three positions are *cibinda wa ng’anda* (head of the home shrine), *kabumba wa mapepo* (enabler or initiator of prayers), *nacimbusa wa cisungu* (marriage mentor), and with these positions women were taught to be industrious and not to be idle. Women were to work in partnership with their husbands in order to provide for their families. For example, Corbeil (1982) recorded various songs that were sung at the initiation ceremony to teach the bride on being industrious; here I illustrate only two. *Mpule fwaka Na Mulenga Nda ee ndahyongoboka, nao, nda ee ndahyongoboka nao*; Corbeil (1982: 94) translates this as ‘Let me beg for tobacco *na* Mulenga that I may go lazily with it, that I

⁹⁷ In this study I grapple with whether Bemba women have transcended the gardening skill (that was taught in pre-modern Zambia) to modern careers that women have positions in currently. Therefore, while I focus on career women being educated I also focus on how *banacimbusa* transmit the teachings of *imbusa* to Bemba women.

may go lazily with it'. This song can be interpreted to mean that if a woman does not work the land to provide for herself and her family, she would end up begging even for unnecessary things like cigarettes. Therefore, a bride was taught to be industrious and work hard for her self-worth and the wellbeing of her family. The next song is *mpela akalonde ndime akabala kandi, mpela akalonde ndime akabala kandi* which is rightly translated by Cobeil (1982: 103) as 'give me my little hoe and let me cultivate my little garden, give me my little hoe and let me cultivate my little garden'. It is also rightly interpreted as teaching the girl to cultivate properly and be ready to work the land at the beginning of the rainy season in order to have enough for her family; she should not expect to have food if she does not work (Corbeil 1982: 103). *Imbusa* songs have multiple meanings, and therefore I should also state categorically that a garden is also referred to as a woman and a hoe as a man, hence, the second song would also mean that a girl reaches a certain age when she begins to long for a man to marry her and seeks for him. While there are other songs recorded by Corbeil (1982) and Rasing (2001) which illustrate how hard working a woman needed to be among the Bemba, I chose only two for purposes of demonstrating the emphasis placed on a woman to be as hard working as she could.

In his book *Bemba Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change*, Hinfelaar (1994) aimed at making "known to a wider public some of the findings not only for academic, but also for pastoral purposes". Hinfelaar's (1994: IX) observation was that among the Bemba, religion was a domain of women. As a result, women were the *cibinda wa ng'anda* (priestess of the home); with this position, women needed their predecessors to coach them on how to take responsibility and live as women with such an important status. Hinfelaar (1994: 12) translates the title *cibinda wa ng'anda* to mean "mistress of the home", however its true translation is owner of the home; among the Bemba a house where there is no woman is known as a house, however as soon as a man marries the house is now a home. Nevertheless, Hinfelaar's (1994:12) interpretation of the title is true; "the deeper significance implies that the woman was the maker and priestess of the home-shrine."⁹⁸ According to legend, man originally lived in grass shelters. It was the woman who taught him how to use the clay of the termite-hill to construct a mud and wattle house." Being *cibinda wa ng'anda* (priestess of the home) meant that the Bemba women took care of all rituals that were important for the well-being of the family and community physically and spiritually.

⁹⁸ See also Kaunda (2010: 6) and Kangwa (2011: 24).

The second religious title Bemba women held was *kabumba wamaŵepo* (enabler/creator of prayers). *Kabumba* is a term associated with God as *kabumba wa mwao* (creator of life). This is interesting because God the creator also endowed a woman with procreation abilities at puberty. With this position, Bemba women would seek the Transcendent in times of calamity and if disaster struck in the community. According to Hinfelaar (1994: 16), in times of national disasters such as epidemics, pestilence, droughts etc., access to the transcendent was only through women. The third title was that of *Nacimbusa wa Cisungu*, Bemba women as custodians of Bemba tradition had a duty and responsibility to pass this onto younger women. *Nacimbusa wa cisungu* means “protector of the miraculous event;” this means that the responsibility to educate the young women in these three positions was a woman’s duty. Hinfelaar (1994: 18) explains that *nacimbusa* and the *nacisungu*/initiate/student became “soul friends;” this is a mentor and mentee relationship because as a tutor/teacher, *nacimbusa*’s duty was on-going. In fact, *nacimbusa* would select one of the students she had taught or initiated into marriage to become her assistant in *imbasa* instructions to other young brides/initiates/students. This was preparation for the mentee to become *nacimbusa* in due time.

As *nacimbusa*, her responsibility was to teach young brides the three positions as well as other aspects associated with marriage. Further, according to Hinfelaar (1994: 1), “during a series of colourful and artistic rituals that lasted for several months”, a Bemba bride “was led through a series of lessons.” These were lessons on the Bemba “people’s worldview, on the clan’s origin and destiny, the community’s notion of the Transcendent and the human predicament and on her position as a future married woman” (Hinfelaar 1994: 1). Whether these aspects are still taught in *imbasa* in contemporary Zambia on the Copperbelt is a question that I raise in this study. Sexuality is an aspect that is predominant in *imbasa* teachings. Kaunda (2013: 40) established that among the Bemba “sex is a big glue” that holds the marriage relationship.

5.2. Bemba Women and Sexuality

“Since sex is considered a significant element of the cultural fabric among the Bemba, sex education is a life-long learning process which begins in early childhood and continues through life”, note

Kaunda and Kaunda (2016: 160). Girls are instructed to elongate their labia from as young as eight to ten years old; this means that sex education starts early for the Bemba girl, and at puberty, she is just instructed further on her position as a woman in the society.

Previously, at the beginning of the initiation rite of *imbusa/icisungu*, *nacimbusa* (tutor) invoked *Lesa* (God) while the initiate (*nacisungu*/bride/student) faced the East. The belief among the Bemba people has been that the East is a place of peace and security, it signifies hope, and it is where they can meet God. Bemba people have claimed to come from Angola in the west (also noted by Hinfelaar 1994:3). For the Bemba, the west denotes the past and is associated with darkness and bad luck. That is why at the initiation ceremony of *icisungu* and *imbusa* teachings, brides were told to face *kukabanga* (East) as the *nacimbusa* said prayers to God (*Lesa*). By facing *kukabanga* (East), the *nacisungu* or the bride tapped into the infinite supply of the blessing and ever-flowing life from *Mayo Tata Lesa* (Mother Father God), and by doing that she was assured of happiness and fulfilled married life as the priestess of her home (Kaunda 2010: 7).⁹⁹ Invoking *Lesa* was important for the Bemba at initiation because *Lesa* had endowed the girl/bride with the gift of sexuality at puberty and as she prepared for marriage, *Lesa* was invoked to give her a secure passage into adulthood and married life.

In pre-colonial Zambia when a girl had reached puberty and was ready for marriage she was secluded and taught day and night for six months what she ought to be as a married woman in society (Turner 1987: 58). During this time of seclusion, she was instructed on various aspects of her responsibility in society and especially in her home as a married woman. During *imbusa* teachings, brides were given lessons in cleanliness, taking care of parents, family, and sexual satisfaction in marriage. Kaunda and Kaunda (2016) have demonstrated how *infunkutu*, Bemba sex dance, one of the media of transmitting and instruction of the *imbusa* teaching, is a source of agency. *Infunkutu* is a sexually charged and stimulating dance that most Zambians dance to even in public, however, in the *imbusa* teaching space it is intentionally used to teach a bride about wriggling her waist in preparation for the marriage consummation and sexual satisfaction in marriage. Sexuality is one aspect that Bemba women enjoy teaching during *imbusa*. In the *imbusa* space, body parts that both women and

⁹⁹ Kaunda stresses that among the Bemba people, women were the priestesses of their homes and consequently the heads. For further discussions on the West-East Bemba belief, see also Mupeta (2014), Kaunda (2013) and Hinfelaar (1994).

men would not specifically mention in a regular conversation are mentioned in this space because there is no need for *banacimbusa* to “sugar coat” anything. *Imbusa* space is a classroom where women talk freely about sexual issues. Bemba women are free to speak and demonstrate their sexual expertise in this space without hesitation. The Bemba women have skilfully mastered the art of dancing their sexuality and they continue to reinvent, renovate and transform it in modern society. In so doing, a more modernised sexual dance practice is passed on to young Bemba brides who have to live in a more complex society. Bemba female sexuality expresses indigenous ways of eroticism within a modernised context. And also because this is a space for women, in order to protect the space from being invaded and “hijacked” by men, it is necessary to have the men and groom/s only attend certain aspects of the teaching and the women continue to empower each other in this woman space.

A bride is expected to be a virgin and, as such, she is taught extensively and thoroughly on how the act of sexual intercourse is performed. For instance, is a cocooned insect that is referred to as *nacisungu*¹⁰⁰ is used as a way of teaching, because the insect stays in a cocoon just as a pubescent girl and a bride are isolated or “cocooned” during the period of instruction. This insect is used to symbolise a penis and the young bride is shown that a man’s genitalia is very delicate and is to be handled with care. A song is sung to this effect, *changa namwele, changa namwele mukashi wandi, changa namwele changa namwele ukanjipaya* (meaning that if as a wife she keeps hitting or wanting to hit her husband around his genitalia whenever they have a misunderstanding, she might end up killing him one day). The common interpretation of this song for those who are not initiated is that a woman must not always rush to get a knife and threaten to kill her husband every time they have a misunderstanding because accidents happen. *Nacimbusa* would gently squeeze the insect out of its cocoon showing the bride that if she handles a penis harshly she might hurt or even kill him. Similarly, she is taught that at the first experience of sexual intercourse, she may experience discomfort and might even bleed (the same cocooned insect is used to demonstrate this). Hence, Haynes’ (2013: 2) observation that Copperbelt Pentecostal women have brought “straight speech” to the *amafunde* is not true, Pentecostal women may have amplified the “straight speech”, however, *imbusa* is a space that has ever embraced straight speech. Haynes compared Copperbelt *amafunde* to

¹⁰⁰ Depending on how and when the term is used, it can mean a virgin, a girl that has reached puberty or a girl that is isolated in order to receive marital instructions from *banacimbusa*.

the ones Richards observed in the 1930s where Richards (1982) stated that the teachings were “obscure”. Richards (1982: 126) cogently stated, “I never heard any part of the ceremony explained. If any useful information was handed down during the *chisungu* one would be inclined to think that the candidates themselves would be the last people to have a chance of acquiring it”. Haynes’ observation comes from her analysis of Richards; the challenge with Richards’ observation however, is that she did not perhaps know that the women present in the rite are initiated ones and needed no interpretation of the songs or pottery.¹⁰¹ Hearing the songs and seeing the pottery is enough to be reminded of the teaching behind that song or pottery for a woman who is initiated. Every *nacisungu* or bride/student of *imbusa* has her *nasenge* (paternal aunt) or *nakalamba* (woman that *nacisungu* first told about her first menstruation) sitting next to her the whole time explaining the song, pottery or figurative teachings given by *nacimbusa* and the other women present all the time. *Imbusa* teachings are coded and women who are initiated are able to “decode” these messages for a neophyte. That is why the bride is always seated next to an initiated *nasenge* so that *nasenge* can decode the *nacimbusa*’s teaching.

Second, she is taught that after each sexual encounter she is to clean her husband using *akanweno*¹⁰² that the couple is given on the wedding night.

Third, a bride was taught on *ukubeyana amaso* (reciprocal shaving of pubic hair by a couple); this is a ritual of pubic hair shaving of each other as spouses. It is also referred to as *ukuwamya ing’anda* (cleaning the home). Rasing (2001: 162) records a song on pubic hair shaving, *nemwine nshibeya amaso nemwine ningala yanyo*, and translates as, “I am the owner I do not shave pubic hair, I am the owner of the feather hat of the vagina”. My translation is, *I do not shave my pubic hair because it is the crown of my vagina*. It is a rebuke to a married woman by *banacimbusa* that she needs to shave her husband and let him shave her as well. A married Bemba woman or man should never shave herself or himself. If a married man or woman dies and she/he is found with unshaved pubic hair, her/his family would conclude that he was not married. Sexual relation between a married couple is known as *icuupo*, hence to be unshaved means the couple were not being intimate that is why they still have pubic hair. Before marriage, she may have enjoyed walking around with unshaved pubic hair but after marriage,

¹⁰¹ *Nacimbusa* and her assistants mould clay symbols such as mortar and pestle, snake, a hut, a woman, a man etc as teaching aids for the bride.

¹⁰² *Akanweno* is a basin that is given to a couple on their wedding night.

she cannot do that. A bride is taught how to go about shaving her spouse and then she teaches him on how he is to shave her. Since in the pre-colonial era there was no shaving instruments, Bemba people shaved each other using ash after burning wood. In the *imbusa* teaching, a chicken was used to demonstrate this act of shaving. *Nacimbusa* would “dress” the chicken and then ask the bride to repeat what *nacimbusa* did. This shaving “dressing” of the chicken had to be done in such a way that the skin was not hurt, and that was how the bride was to shave her husband. With the ritual of *ukubeyana amaso*, there is also *akatemba cuupo* which Rasing (2001:157) explains as “leaving something for the husband” and Kangwa (2012:26) translates it as “marriage holder”. *Akatemba cuupo* is translated as ‘marriage sustainer’ and is interpreted to be special things that a woman has to do for a spouse with a clear indication that it is done for the spouse because they are special and are valued. During the teaching, one can interpret, like Rasing, that *akatemba cuupo* means food¹⁰³ left behind for a husband and no one is allowed to eat it unless the spouse shared it with them. The concept, however, is about showing care and attention to the spouse. Therefore, *akatemba cuupo* refers to nice things done for a spouse that are dear to him, thereby enticing him with what he loves so as to maintain his love and respect as well as to safeguard and nurture the marriage. This is equivalent to buying chocolate and flowers for a spouse; the point is that occasionally, one lets the spouse know that s/he is thinking about him/her. *Akatemba cuupo* extends to sex, as rightly noted by Rasing (2001: 157). That is why a Bemba bride is taught to “twerk” and dance seductively for her husband. Bemba men are not immune to giving *akatemba cuupo* to their wives in forms of gifts as well as sexual satisfaction. Men are to put a gift in the marriage pot (*akanweno*) every now and then as *akatemba cuupo* to his wife. The same marriage pot that the couple uses to purify each other after intercourse is used to this effect.

Fourth, *infunkutu* sexual dance was taught. In a recent article “*Infunkutu*—the Bemba Sexual Dance as Women’s Sexual Agency”, Kaunda and Kaunda (2016) have explored how the *imbusa* rite is a space of sexual agency for Bemba women. The *imbusa* rite uses three methods of transmission: song, dance and visual aids (pottery images) (Kaunda 2013: 15). All three are not for entertainment; they transmit useful information and meaning every time they are used. Turner (1969: 15) explains this concisely when he states that in initiation rites, “almost every article used, every gesture employed,

¹⁰³ This food is usually used when one wants to “bewitch” or cast a spell on a spouse since he/she is assured that the spouse will be the only one to eat that food.

every song or prayer, every unit of space and time, by convention stands for something other than itself. It is more than it seems, and often a good deal more”. There are a variety of ways in which *infunkutu* is taught in *imbusa*; there are dance moves that suggests *ukuongola* (to arouse/entice) one’s spouse with sexual dance moves. Other times the bride is taught how the dance moves would come in handy, using various sexual positions in marriage.

5.3. The Traditional Cultural Imbusa Curriculum

The cultural curriculum of *imbusa* is significant for the Bemba people as it has the content for training married women. This section presents the Bemba tradition cultural *imbusa* curriculum as it is currently taught in the Copperbelt province of Zambia. The traditional indigenous *imbusa* curriculum communicated the Bemba people’s worldviews and traditions; with the people’s contact with various cultures, however, the curriculum was influenced in the encounter. The curriculum presented below is the form that has been used in postcolonial Zambia. With the changes in the *imbusa* curriculum, Bemba women have received teaching that has aspects of teachings from patrilineal and matrilineal cultures. With these changes, the *imbusa* school produced Bemba married women who have been molded in a particular way that is not necessarily Bemba. This is because at the same time that other cultures were affecting *imbusa* teachings and curriculum, colonial officials sought after Bemba men to work on the mines. These brought about changes in marriage relationships, as Ault (1981) rightly notes. Valuable teachings have been lost because of these cultural encounters. For instance, Bemba women are no longer taught about their duty as priestesses of their homes, or as enablers of prayers in their homes and communities. The *older Bemba women often teach the imbusa indigenous curriculum* because in Bemba worldview, *banacimbusa* were regarded as the “archives” of the Bemba people’s culture. Larry Labelle and Sherry Peden (2003: 12) in their article “Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into Curricula: A Resource for Curriculum Developers, Teachers, and Administrators” similarly explained that elders among the Aborigines are the “archives of the communities”. The older Bemba women have been transmitting the *imbusa* curriculum to young Bemba brides in line with the indigenous worldview. Currently some relatively younger *banacimbusa* have been involved in the teaching of *imbusa*.

5.3.1. Community of Practice

Women in *imbusa* teaching form what is known as a community of practice. I have used “community of practice” (hereafter CoP) to define and analyse *imbusa* teachings and how these teachings affect Bemba women’s experiences in everyday life. The term “communities of practice” is attributed to anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991 when “they examined how ‘master practitioners’ and ‘newcomers’ form apprenticeship relationships ... through which situated learning takes place” as noted by Christopher Koliba and Rebecca Gajda (2009). Etienne Wenger has defined a community of practice as one formed by a group of people with similar interests and desired outcomes. This is true of the *imbusa* initiation rite, formed by women who desire marriage longevity and harmony within marriage. Bemba women’s interests are to pass on the secrets they claim are beneficial for marriage survival and longevity, to younger Bemba brides. Further, Wenger (2006: 1) defines a CoP as formed by “people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor”. *Imbusa* teachings are a space or community where Bemba women – married and about to be married – come together to learn and share knowledge and experiences (Kaunda 2013). Bemba married women (as well as those from other ethnic groups) who have undergone the rite are invited into the *imbusa* teaching space to teach and share their experiences with the brides in order to prepare them for what Bemba marriage is about. Their shared responsibility is to the young bride while at the same time they have a “refresher course¹⁰⁴” in the process of teaching. As a community of practice, the *imbusa* teaching space has a responsibility to pay attention to world debates such as gender and social justice, where “...women would like to see the end of sexism and the establishment of a more just society of men and women who seek the well-being of the other”, as explained by Phiri (2008:2). As *banacimbusa* and Bemba married women (career women or not), continue learning, engaging and sharing together on issues concerning and affecting Bemba married women, there is a need to be up to date with debates on issues concerning women. According to Alejandro Barragán-Ocaña, Álvaro Quijano-Solis, Guadalupe Vega-Díaz, and Benito Sánchez-Laraca (2012: 741), CoP is:

¹⁰⁴ While *banacimbusa* are the instructors in the *imbusa* teaching, they do not teach every single day from January to December like in an academic institution. There are periods when there are no marriages happening and *banacimbusa* are therefore not teaching. When they get back to teach, it is a refresher course for them as well as other women that are invited in to the teaching space.

...a dynamic and complex learning system that is generated and developed from the common interest of individuals experienced in a knowledge area... Their purpose, based on sharing experiences and knowledge of all their participants in the search for solutions to common problems, is to identify the best practices contributing to the performance and learning improvements of all participants and organizations involved.

This means that *banacimbusa* and their assistants have a responsibility to work at improving the teachings, and not only to hold on to teachings that were previously held by their predecessors. Times change and people change, Kapwepwe (1994) pointed out, and with such change, teachings have to be updated and screened to keep those that are life-giving and fitting for that time and context. *Banacimbusa* came together in harmony and desiring common outcomes for their marriages, forming a community of practice known as *imbusa* and *icisungu*. Hence, using the CoP theory, I will analyse how Bemba married women unite with each other in order to preserve their marriages and how they assist younger brides to learn ways of navigating their homes and work places. A CoP, states Wenger (2001: 1), can be identified as "...groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." Whenever there is a marriage in the community, *banacimbusa* and other married women come together to teach and interact as married women for the common good of women in marriage. In line with this, Wenger (2006: 1) identifies three characteristics that make a CoP shown below:

... **domain**, a community of practice is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people. **Community**, in pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other... The **practice**, a community of practice is not merely a community of interest--people who like certain kinds of movies, for instance. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice.

I have used a lengthy quote above to demonstrate the three characteristics of a CoP. Effectively; these characteristics are domain, community and practice. *Imbusa* as a community of practice has a domain of interests ranging from sharing experiences and teaching the marital curriculum together. They engage in activities and discussions around married women's experiences, sex education, fertility etc., and currently, *imbusa* teachings are not restricted to Bemba women only – they

incorporate married women from other ethnic groups within Zambia. Moreover, as the old African adage goes “it takes a village to raise a child”, *banacimbusa* and other married women teach young brides and each other communally and not individually, in fact they teach differently from an academic education system where there is one or two lecturers and 20 students. In *imbusa* teachings, there are more teachers than students and *banacimbusa* focus their teaching on religio-cultural experiences of Bemba married women. In fact, it can be argued that religion and culture continue to influence and affect Bemba women’s experiences in their everyday life whether it is in their homes or work places; hence the need for *imbusa* teachings among the Bemba.

I will therefore present the *imbusa* teachings as it is taught in Zambia currently in a course outline format, drawing on the works of scholars such as Richards, Rasing, Turner, Mushibwe, Haynes, Kaunda, Mupeta and Lumbwe.

5.3.2. Overview

This is a pre-marriage preparation course that introduces young Bemba career women to society’s expectations of a married woman’s life. The aim of this traditional *imbusa* teaching is for young Bemba brides to learn their identity as married women. Marriage is significant to Bemba people and women are seen as central to marriage and a home. That is why every Bemba woman intending to get married is expected to be schooled in the role that she has to play as a married woman in society. The significance of this course is to “mentor young women in *muntambi ne fisbalano* (time-honoured social values)” (Kaunda 2013: 12). Mercy Oduyoye (1995b: 11 and Tamale, 2005: 9) has observed that rites are important for women in Africa because such rites give women an identity and status among their peers; this is true of the Bemba *imbusa* initiation rite. Students of this course are women about to get married, many brides can be taught together, but usually it is one bride at a time because it is rare that couples plan to marry at the same time. There are usually more *banacimbusa* than the number of brides being taught, the highest number of brides being taught together would be about three. Hinfelaar (1994: 2-3) has described the Bemba worldview generally as closely linked to marriage because marriage is the foundation of a nation (Kapwepwe 1994: 4) and therefore, marriage is sacred among the Bemba people. That is why gradual steps are taken before marriage is finally reached (Richards 1956: 43). Yezenge (2001) has meticulously outlined the process that takes

place from *ukukobekela* (engagement) to *icunpo* (marriage). Bemba people believe that no woman should go into marriage without preparation and instructions on her responsibilities as a woman and as a homemaker.¹⁰⁵ *Lesa* (God) is the one that gives the sacral aspect of marriage. *Imbusa* is about revealing these sacral values of marriage and is entrusted to the woman as a priestess to teach and guide her home in the ways of *Lesa*. Thus, a number of rituals are involved in the teaching in order to keep the marriage pure. Friedman (1992: 839) argues that people belong to a group because they share some mutual element with others regardless of how they live. For the Bemba, how a woman lives after initiation is important – in fact, it is what brings her into the inner circle of married women. A woman that has undergone *imbusa* teachings cannot live differently from how she was taught by the women that have knowledge of *imbusa* because this is what sets her apart as a learned/taught married woman. An observation is that most men who have certain expectations of their wives take their wives back to be re-taught if they are not exhibiting convincing behaviour of a taught woman. Because this is a shame for both a taught woman and her family, most women follow the teachings religiously until they find a way of negotiating and navigating these teachings in their societies. This can be perceived as a husband being the final examiner of the *banacimbusa*'s teaching. The course involves teachings on a number of issues that a Bemba woman has to take care of if she is to live harmoniously with her husband in marriage. Below is the outline of the *imbusa* curriculum as it is currently taught:

5.3.3. Course Presentation

The sessions are facilitated primarily in lecture style, monologue, and are usually conducted for up to four hours a day. This will take place until the wedding day for one month or more. Sessions will be set for the time that the young bride finishes work every day (if she is a career woman). Further, the sessions will utilise visual aids, songs, stories and a lot of action to teach the new brides (Kaunda 2013). This course offers a series of lectures and does not require any reading or intensive independent research by the young bride who is the student. The sessions will be taking place either in the home of *banacimbusa* or in the bedroom of the bride to be.

¹⁰⁵ Among the Bemba people, it is believed that a woman makes a home; before a man gets married he has a house and when he marries, he has home.

Rasing (2010: 1) noted that, “in urban areas there is a mixture of traditions, modernity, western ideas, western based education, and influence of Christianity.” All these have been incorporated into *imbusa* teachings. Currently, it is not surprising to find creams such as hair removers while teaching a bride on the ritual of spousal pubic hair shaving, which previously was not welcomed into the teaching space because a bride needed to learn to shave using a blade. There is also inclusion of different ethnic groups in the *imbusa* teaching space currently. Women from various ethnic groups teach a Bemba bride, because the Copperbelt is not a province for the Bemba people specifically, I personally was taught by women from two different ethnic groups.

5.3.4. Description

The current *imbusa* course begins with an introduction of the rite by the *nacimbusa* and other facilitators (her assistants) to the young Bemba bride/s (Richards 1982: 64). *Nacimbusa* blesses the ceremony by calling on the ancestral spirits of the initiates or to *Lesa* (God) of the Christians. This section describes what forms of teaching the course will take. There will be teachings on aspects such as how a Bemba woman takes care of her husband, in-laws and her own family in marriage just as there will be erotic teachings.

5.3.5. Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, a young Bemba woman is expected to demonstrate:

- Knowledge of how to sexually satisfy her husband
- Ability to take care of her in-laws and her family
- Knowledge of how a Bemba woman takes care of the home and the rituals involved
- An understanding that she is the one who has to take care of her marriage and protect it from other things and people that can destroy it
- The skill to give her husband immense sexual pleasure
- An ability to teach another young bride these *amafunde* when called upon by *nacimbusa*

5.4. Imbusa teachings at a Glance

The overview or outline of the activities of the *imbusa* teachings will be given using the observation by Richards (1982 [1956]), Hinfelaar (1994), Kapwepwe (1994) and Rasing (2001). I emphasise that this curriculum below is one currently taught after contact with and influence by various other cultures and religions.

Session	Topic	Activity	Facilitator
Day One	Secluding the bride and introducing her to the expectations of the <i>nacimbusa</i> .	Blessing in the form of prayers, songs and dances.	<i>Nachimbusa</i> with other married women in the community.
Day Two	Rituals in the woodlands.	Catching an insect on the water with the mouth and the bride jumping over heaped piles of leaves. Performance/teaching of everyday life of the bride as a married woman by some women in the community.	<i>Nachimbusa</i>
Day Three	Making of pottery of various paintings as teaching aids.	Women design and work hard at making pottery and drawings for the teaching.	<i>Nachimbusa</i>
Day Four	Pottery making continues.	Women mould various symbols using clay for the purposes of teaching such as snake, turtle, hut, guinea fowl, mortar and pestle.	

Day Five	Pottery making continues.	Women mold various symbols using clay for the purposes of teaching such as snake, turtle, hut, guinea fowl, mortar and pestle.	
Day Six	Pottery making continues.	Women continue to mold various symbols using clay for the purposes of teaching.	
Day Seven	Woodland or bush rituals and testing the bride on maturity and wisdom.	Brides taught to be industrious and assertive.	<i>Nacimbusa</i> and paternal aunt/s of the bride
Day Eight	Sex and submission in marriage.	The brides are taught sexual dance moves subtly.	<i>Nacimbusa</i> and the women
Day Nine	Sex education continues (focusing on manhood) using the pottery symbol of a snake.	Modelling pottery figures for the teaching.	<i>Nacimbusa</i>
Day Ten	Sex and fertility education continues.	Sex dance moves and positions are taught to the bride.	<i>Nacimbusa</i> and other women.
Day eleven	Respect, kindness, submission, and dress code appropriate for a married woman.	Performance teaching, the bride's mother brings gifts to <i>nacimbusa</i> .	<i>Nacimbusa</i> and her helpers.
Day Twelve	Sex education.	The bride displays what sexual moves she has learnt so far.	<i>Nacimbusa</i>

Day Thirteen	Teaching on sex and manhood using the snake <i>imbusa</i> (emblem) as well as pubic shaving.	Bride taught that the snake is a symbol of manhood. That hard work in the home, keeping the home clean.	<i>Nacimbusa</i> and her helpers.
Day Fourteen	Conception, childbirth and <i>infunkutu</i> sex dance.	Bride taught the responsibility women have during and after child birth	
Day Fifteen	Sex education and sexual dance moves.	Teaching on how bride needs to satisfy her husband.	<i>Nacimbusa</i> and the present women.
Day Sixteen	Honouring the <i>mwenge</i> female tree in the bush/woodlands.	Teaching on fertility.	<i>Nacimbusa</i> and helpers
Day Seventeen	<i>Infunkutu</i> , sex dance and the purification ritual.	Teaching on (not denying her husband) sexual pleasure.	<i>Nacimbusa</i>
Day Eighteen	Sensual Beads.	Teaching on the Bemba colours (red, black and white).	<i>Nacimbusa</i>
Day Nineteen	Agricultural and domestic duties.	Teaching on the bride responsibilities as a married woman.	<i>Nacimbusa</i> and the women.
Day Twenty	Motherhood.	The bride's responsibility to the family as a young mother.	<i>Nacimbusa</i>
Day twenty-	<i>Ukulasa imbasa</i> (hitting one of the sacred emblems by	The groom comes to claim his bride by hitting an <i>imbasa</i>	<i>Banacimbasa</i> leads the groom and his sisters.

One	the groom as a way a husband claims his wife ¹⁰⁶).	pottery on the wall with a bow and arrow.	
Day Twenty-Two	Ceremony ends with much celebration.	Bride/s presented to the community by <i>banacimbusa</i> .	<i>Banacimbusa</i>
Day Twenty Three	Bride/s and groom/s session together.	<i>Banacimbusa</i> report to the groom/s what the bride has been taught.	<i>Banacimbusa</i> and <i>bashi bukombe</i> (the man selected to present the engagement proposal of the groom to the bride's family).
Day Twenty Four	Bride/s taken to her husband.	The bride to satisfy her husband sexually.	<i>Banacimbusa</i> and <i>nasenge</i> (paternal aunt).
Day Twenty Five	Report from the final examiner (the bride/s' husband) on the bride/s' sexual performance.	The groom/s report to <i>banacimbusa</i> whether he was satisfied with the bride's sexual performance or whether he would like <i>bacimbusa</i> to teach more in that regard.	<i>Banacimbusa</i> and the groom.

The curriculum above shows that it is focused on women's traditional or indigenous teachings and learning. In what follows, I use a feminist postcolonial pedagogical lens to explore both the delivery and reception of this traditional cultural curriculum. Feminist pedagogy is a flexible teaching and

¹⁰⁶ Claiming one's wife during *ukulasa imbusa* has sexual connotations, this implies that he will be able to sexually satisfy his wife.

learning technique that seeks to be dialogical in nature and links with Paulo Freire's (1996) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and Linda Keesing-Styles (2003). I am using feminist postcolonial pedagogy as a lens through which to explore how Bemba women in the private and public spheres negotiate the teachings of *imbusa* shown above. The teachings in the curriculum above show that the bride is not an active participant in the process of the teaching. Using feminist pedagogy in this study is useful as it opens discussion on the way *imbusa* is taught. A bride is passive and is supposed to receive the teachings without questioning. As the teaching is currently, submission is also taught in the way that is not inherently Bemba. Interacting and borrowing from other cultures may have resulted in this kind of submission that is currently upheld in *imbusa* teachings. This goes against the feminist postcolonial pedagogy that advances learning as engagement of the learner and teacher together. As a space that equips women to be agents in their own home, allowing students to be active participants and dialoguing with *banacimbusa* is critical.

The course outline demonstrates how Bemba women are prepared for marriage and what is expected of them as married women by society. The above curriculum is tailored for career and non-career women together, despite some career women wanting a more progressive marriage curriculum. *Amafunde yambusa* on the Copperbelt need not be seen as negative. It is imperative rather, to look at the *imbusa* as a critical space that has content to influence the past and social forces that form Bemba women, and limited though significant resources from the community (Copperbelt). The questions remain; how has this discourse of *imbusa* impacted the Bemba women on the Copperbelt? Are Bemba women being taught to take up and pursue careers during *imbusa* teachings in postcolonial Zambia?

5.5. Conclusion

Imbusa teachings are for the preparation and training of young brides. However, during the encounter with Christianity and modernisation, the colonisers and missionaries as well as various cultures played a role in the changes that have taken place in *imbusa*; women that were perceived as priestesses of their homes and initiators of prayers, among many other responsibilities, are now mostly financially dependent on men. The chapter presented the *imbusa* teachings in a form of a course outline in order to show what is currently taught to women on the Copperbelt during the *imbusa* teaching. I have intentionally described the Bemba people's worldview and origin in order

that their history is highlighted. Then, I also focused on women's teachings on their sexuality as it is an integral aspect of *imbusa* teachings and cannot be left out of this study. It has been argued in this chapter that the concept of *imbusa* has undergone modification at its practical level. This is due in part to its contact with various cultures as well as colonial administrators' attempts to transform what they considered 'uncivilised practices' of the ritual, and to conform it to colonial frameworks of marriage. *Imbusa* has remained unchanged at its fundamental level as argued by Rasing (2004: 277),¹⁰⁷ who has stated that although many changes have taken place in Zambia, currently *imbusa* initiation rites remain resilient even in the cities. This suggests that a practice can change at its practical level and yet remain unchanged in its essence.

The following chapter discusses the methodology that was used in the data collection process and how the data was analysed.

¹⁰⁷ See also Haynes (2013).

CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

6.0. Introduction

The previous chapter engaged with postcolonial/decolonial indigenous scholars in investigating how the teachings of *imbusa* function in contemporary Bemba society and located the study in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia, which is the city in which the fieldwork was carried out. This current chapter discusses the methods that were employed in the data collection and analysis process. As a critical qualitative feminist study, it is aimed at “describing and understanding rather than the explanation and prediction of human behavior” (Babbie et al. 2001: 53). As Naemeka (2003: 363) explains,

feminist scholarship brings up for scrutiny the human agency implicated in knowledge formation and information management. We cannot assume critical thinking without asking crucial questions about what is being thought critically and who is thinking it critically.

This chapter demonstrates the steps taken in inviting seventeen Bemba married career women to share their critical views about *imbusa*, and discusses their experiences of *imbusa* teachings in everyday life. The methods of data production and analysis align with feminist ways of producing knowledge. The purpose is to thematically describe, analyze and theorize Bemba career women’s¹⁰⁸ agency in understanding and negotiating *amafunde yambusa* between their work place and home. ‘Methodology’ is used in this study to mean an approach to data production or analysis, whereas ‘method’ is used to mean techniques of data production or analysis, as differentiated by Swann and Pratt (2003: 206). The sections are outlined as follows: Research design, sampling, methods of data production, reflexivity, methods of data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical considerations.

6.1. Research Design

As a Bemba married woman who has undergone *amafunde yambusa* for married Bemba women, I intentionally applied feminist principles in the data production and analysis methods. Scholars

¹⁰⁸ Specifically Bemba married women living on the Copperbelt Province, who have been to college/university and are working.

usually have a bias in their approach to various aspects of the research they undertake. Having intimate knowledge of the Bemba people and the secrecy accorded to *imbusa* teachings I am aware that a woman that reveals what she was taught in *imbusa* is a *chumbu munshololwa*, meaning that woman is like a crooked shaped sweet potato if you try to straighten it, it will break instead of straightening. Therefore, I assured the participants that I would give them pseudonyms. I also had to employ critical qualitative feminist paradigms that took account of my own reflexivity in the research process. For example, when accepting to contribute to the research, the participants knew I was a Bemba woman who is married and has undergone the teachings as well.

According to Creswell (2009: 5), a research design is “the plan or proposal to conduct research, [which] involves the intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods.” As a qualitative feminist research, this research sought to engage Bemba women in conversations concerning their experiences of *imbusa* teachings and its impact in their work place and homes. Being located in a critical postcolonial/decolonial feminist paradigm, this study sought to critically engage Bemba women’s critical reflection of the knowledge that is received from *imbusa* in postcolonial Zambia and whether and how appropriately this knowledge fits into the contemporary Bemba career married women’s experiences of everyday life in the home and work place. Poewe (1981) has discussed in detail the status of Luapula women in pre-colonial and colonial times, noting that women and men had similar positions in society; the question arises, are postcolonial Bemba women still holding those same positions in society in the Copperbelt province of Zambia? A feminist postcolonial/decolonial paradigm has the potential of probing Bemba women’s lived experiences in connection with the prescribed norms of the society that define women’s positions in their communities. A sample of seventeen career women who have undergone *imbusa* teachings was reached between October and November 2014 in order to critically engage with women on *imbusa* teachings.

6.1.1. Research Participants and Sampling

In this section, I describe the research participants, why they were selected, and how the sampling was done. The sample of the study initially involved 15 (2 were included due to their availability and meeting the criteria, therefore 17) married, Bemba career women of Zambia in different fields of

work including high school teachers, accountants, human resource managers, information technologist, bank manager, health/ hospital administrator and a pastor. The age of the participants varied between twenty-eight to fifty-three years old at the time of the interviews. The selection of these participants was because of their eligibility to contribute to the understanding of *imbusa* teachings and how these career women engage with the *amafunde yambusa* in their daily lives as married and career women. The supposition was that married career women give various interpretations to these teachings, depending on their perception of *imbusa* as well as their field of work. Hence, women from diverse fields of employment were selected to illuminate whether and how these teachings empowered them to take up careers and excel in their careers as women.

Prior to the actual fieldwork, I spoke to two friends in Zambia who would lead me to Bemba women that were willing to participate in the interview. One was heavily pregnant and was unable to help and the other one was of significant assistance. From August 2014, we planned via text messages on WhatsApp as well as phone calls. Initially, my friend verbally explained the purpose of the study, until I went to Zambia and I verbally requested the women to take part as well as asked them to sign a consent form after reading and understanding it. A letter requesting them to participate and explaining the purpose of the study was given to them after they had verbally agreed to participate in the interview. The letter described the research participants to be involved, that it was not every married Bemba woman, rather the ones that have been to university/college and were currently in employment see (appendix 1). The fieldwork was conducted in October and November 2014.

6.1.2. Sampling

Having been away from Zambia for over five years, there was a need for a contact person to lead me to the women in the study. I contacted a friend, and she led me to three women who led me to other women who were interested to take part in the study. I contacted a friend because as Rasing poits out clearly, “a large town makes it difficult to start a research project, to get to know people...” Although I was born and bred in Chingola, a town that I carried out fieldwork, I have been away from the town for over six years and needed a contact person to be able to reach participants that were fitting the criteria of my research. Snowball sampling was therefore, utilized in recognizing the

women that were the focus of the study. As the research progressed, more women were recognized and the participants increased in number like a snowball rolling down the hill (Neuman and Lawrence 1994: 199). For a qualitative study like this one, Rowland Atkinson and John Flint (2001: 2) note that snowball sampling is advantageous because “the main value of snowball sampling is as a method for obtaining respondents where they are few in number or where some degree of trust is required to initiate contact.” With *imbusa* being Bemba women’s secrets, there was need for trust to be established between the participants and me as researcher. Being an insider as a Bemba married woman who has undergone the teachings was one of the contributing factors to the trust. That someone known to them introduced me to the participants was another factor that assisted in facilitating the trust. Some participants gained such trust in me that they would suggest colleagues in the same place of work. For instance at Konkola Copper Mines,¹⁰⁹ one participant directed me to her boss and another friend whom I interviewed as well. As Atkinson and Flint (2001: 1) write, a participant gives the researcher a name of a potential participant and the sample grows as participants suggest further participants. Hence, Atkinson and Flint (2001: 2) acknowledge, “Trust may be developed as referrals are made by acquaintances or peers rather than other more formal methods of identification.” Participants were asked whether they knew of other Bemba women who would be willing to take part in the research. Douglas Heckathorn and Robert Magnani (2003: 1) explain that “this process continues until either the respondent group has been “saturated” in the sense that no new information is being provided by new ‘recruits’ or until a sample of predetermined size has been reached”. Below is Figure 1, showing an example of snowball sampling and how it builds up in the process of being introduced to other participants:

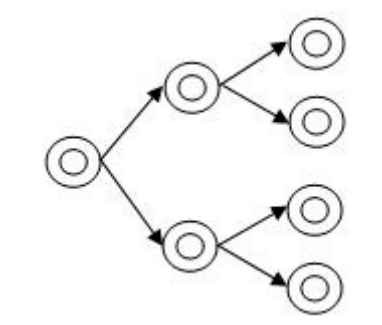


Fig1. Shows how the sample grows in a snowball (<https://explorable.com/snowball-sampling>)

¹⁰⁹ This is one of the biggest copper mines in the world.

Heckathorn and Magnani (2003: 1; Neuman, 1994) explain that participants have to be informed of the objectives for the research and should consent to being interviewed. Termeh Shafie (2010: 1) explains that this type of sampling is used to identify hard to reach populations. In the case of this study however, it was because I needed help identifying Bemba, married, career women in a town I have not lived in for over five years. Further, Shafie (2010: 2) stresses, “There exists no list or frame to sample from but the elements are connected by social relations.” Access to various participants in this study was indeed through Bemba women that are socially connected. The sample that was picked in Chingola is socially connected to each other; first, they are either friends or colleagues at work and second, they are married and career women who have information regarding the *imbusa* teachings that is the focus for this study. Interviews were conducted in the place that was available; most interviews were carried out in offices of the participants at the place of work. A few were done in the homes of the participants and two were done in the home where I was accommodated. In Chingola Zambia a childhood friend and her husband accommodated me, and she was also my contact person in meeting the required number of participants for my research. Fieldwork was conducted in October and November 2014. Participants agreed that I would give them pseudonyms except one who chose her own pseudonym (Sandy Matipa).

Demographic Data for In-depth Interview (Table 1)

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Age	Level of Education	Occupation
Delfister Ngosa	53	College	Pastor (Church Director)
Esther Musama	32	University	Branch manager (IT Expert)
Nancy Chomba	30	College	Physiotherapy Technologist (Pastor's wife)
Bernice Mulanda	43	College	Superintendent or Manager
Jenny Mupeta	37	College	Primary School Teacher
Esnart Ngandwe	36	College	High School Teacher
Betty Nonde	49	College	High School Teacher
Pamela Kalenga	49	University	High School Teacher
Patricia Kabwe	36	University	Human Resource Manager (Learning & Development)
Jelita Lwanga	32	University	Senior Section Surveyor
Sandy Matipa	45	University	General Manager (HR) & Nature professional
Josephine Mwansa	57	University	Hospital Administrator and Gender Advisor
June Sampa	33	University	High School Teacher
Pengo Ng'andu	38	College	Clinical Instructor and Nurse
Mulenga Mukupa	36	University	Accounts Manager
Peni Chomba	30	College	Cost Accountant

Naphtali Nkole	29	College	Compliance Officer

The demographic data above shows that participants for the in-depth feminist interviews were all above the age of 25 (the youngest was 30 years old at the time of the interview) and this is a reasonable and practical age for a woman to have been to college/university, working and married. I interviewed two more career women, which increased the number to seventeen even though I had initially set out to interview fifteen women. The two added participants were included in this study as they brought to the research the experiences that were important and valid for the study. The two participants were educated (they had been to college or university) and had gone through *imbusa* teachings before they went into marriage, which made them eligible to provide reliable data needed for this study. My host (during fieldwork) and I went to visit her mother and we met two of her acquaintances on the way. As we spoke about families after introductions, we somehow happened to talk about *imbusa*. My host then explained that I was doing research on that. One of the two said she would not mind being interviewed. We then made an appointment, and I met her for the interview in her home two days later. The second woman I met at Church one Sunday after Church service. I had interviewed the pastor's wife from that Church and the pastor's wife brought this woman and said the two of them had been talking about the interview I had with the pastor's wife and this woman was interested in taking part. I told them that I had reached the number I had intended to interview but since she was willing and she met the criteria I would interview her as well. As shown in Table 1 above, participants are involved in various careers. These occupations also comprise the middle-class. Despite this diversity in their occupation, they all had one thing in common; they all went through teachings that prepared them for marriage.

6.1.3. Data Production: Process and Methods

As already stated, the earliest empirically based initiation rites studies were done by anthropologists, who essentially relied on ethnographic research methods. Presently, as initiation rites have gained

significance in academic circles, economists, feminists, gender activists, and anthropologists¹¹⁰ have researched the phenomenon. Zambians have also been researching not only *imbusa*, but rites of passage from other Zambian ethnic groups as well.¹¹¹ Most of these scholars relied on either ethnographic or quantitative research methods or a combination of both. Presently, cultural anthropologists, economists and social scientists¹¹² mostly research the *imbusa* phenomenon. Ethnography¹¹³ research has been the prime method used by anthropologists who have been major researchers of initiation rites. This study uses feminist interviewing as a means of data production. Drawing on the qualitative notion of feminist interviewing, the study employed in-depth interviews as a data production method to gather information concerning the indigenous *imbusa* teachings of the Bemba people of the Copperbelt province of Zambia. Bagele Chilisa (2012: 99) argues that all members of the community, young and old, male and female, have indigenous knowledge. This study intentionally focused on Bemba career women living and working in the Copperbelt province in Chingola, because it is women who receive the *imbusa* teaching and not men among the Bemba people. The following techniques were used as strategies for data production in this study:

6.1.4. Feminist In-depth Interviewing

Using feminist interview methods in this study was significant in revealing women's lived experiences and views on the *imbusa* teachings. Lucy Bailey (2012: 392) and Gill Eagle (2002: 441) have shown that feminists intend to place women's issues on the research agenda and not let men write women's experiences. In the same vein, Phiri and Nadar (2006: 8) explain that women need to write and tell their own stories and not let men do it on their behalf. Feminist interviewing also significantly assisted me to analyse the *imbusa* teachings through the participants' eyes. As Mary Maynard (2004:133) argues, feminist interviewing enables the researcher to see the phenomena

¹¹⁰ Richards was a social anthropologist who obtained her doctorate from London School of Economics as noted in an obituary by Raymond Firth (1985: 341); Haynes is a social anthropologist as well, "working at the intersection of religion and political economy" (http://www.san.ed.ac.uk/people/faculty/naomi_haynes). Annette Drews is a psychologist and medical anthropologist who in 1995 authored "Covering and Uncovering: Secrets and the Construction of Gender Identity among the Kunda of Zambia", a rite of passage similar to *imbusa*.

¹¹¹ See for example Kaunda 2013 and 2016, Lumbwe 2004 and 2009, Mushibwe 2009 just to mention a few.

¹¹² See for instance Haynes (2015), Drews (1995), Rude (2009).

¹¹³ See for example Richards (1982); Turner (1987); Rasing (2001); Mushibwe (2009); Haynes (2012) to mention just a few.

through the participants' eyes. Maynard (2004:133) further explains that where research is carried out in "non-exploitive and ethically responsible ways", it critiques forms of research that involve hierarchical power relations. Shulamit Reinharz (1992: 18) explains that feminist interviewing is an appropriate strategy in critical research for engaging participants to reflect on their reality and giving them a voice. Through the process of the interview with Bemba women, they were reflecting on their reality concerning *imbusa* and raised issues that they would like the instructors to critically reflect as well. However, I am not oblivious to the fact that since in their everyday lives women are regularly challenged with typical ideal gender norms and the penalties of defying them at home and at work, it is likely that Bemba women may at times modify their responses in interviews to conform toward accepted gender roles. This bias was realised in the preliminary answers of two Bemba women who are high school teachers in this study.

Bailey (2012: 392)¹¹⁴ has explained, "feminist research is concerned with knowledge, critique, and action". Consistent with this, among the women who were interviewed, some expressed a desire to take the knowledge that was shared during interviews into the *imbusa* teaching space. Reinhaz (1992: 19) declares that feminist interviewing allows the researcher access to their "ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words and not the words of the researcher". Feminist interviewing is in this sense concerned with the trust relationship between researcher and the participants. Eagle et al (2002: 444) note that feminists establish trust with the participants in order to get fair and true information. In keeping with Eagle et al's observation, the participants in this study were assured that information they shared was confidential and they were allowed to stop the interview at any time. Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland (2002: 7) maintain that in feminism women are the focus of the study because they "share a gendered social position" no matter how different their experiences. With a shared position of the Bemba career women on the Copperbelt, I investigated their different experiences. Bell (2005: 115) demonstrates that methods are employed in order to provide relevant data to yield comprehensive research. Choices have to be made about methods that are best for particular purposes and then data-collecting instruments must be designed to do the job. It is in this view that feminist in-depth interviews were employed in this study.

¹¹⁴ See also Eagle 2002: 441

One semi-structured interview schedule was used to conduct the interviews for all seventeen women interviewed (see appendix 4). This was an interview guide as other questions were formulated as the interview proceeded. The interviews assisted me to probe the participants' understandings concerning the *imbusa* teachings and their negotiation of these teachings in the home and in their work place. Marshall and Rossman (2006: 101) explain that through in-depth interviews, the "researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participants' views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses".

Additionally, in-depth interview as a method is based on the assumption that the participants' perspective on the subject under study should develop as the participant views it (Marshall & Rossman, 2006: 101). Terre-Blanche et al. (2006) explains that it is important to understand the subject from the participants' point of view and not from the researcher's. Thus, the in-depth feminist interviews sought to demonstrate Bemba women's understandings of *imbusa* with regard to the following three general topics:

- How married career women negotiate *amafunde yambusa* in their homes and at places of work.
- The effectiveness of women's agency in negotiating the *amafunde yambusa*.
- The ways career women engage *amafunde yambusa* in both private and public spaces respectively.

The participants gave their perceptions and interpretations of the *imbusa* teachings and how they navigate them, following the topics that I had predetermined as the researcher. This situation can also be described as co-production of data between the researcher and research participants (Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis, 2003). The participants were offered the option to have the interview in English or Bemba and they all preferred English, however, where the need arose, they would revert into Bemba. Most of the interviews took place in the offices of the participants, as it was the most convenient place for them.

6.1.5. Research Reflexivity

In line with feminist research, researchers ought to state their positionality. Reinharz (1992: 240) explains that feminist research includes the researcher in the research process. As a researcher I have been socialised by my cultural context hence, I cannot rid this cultural context from how I conduct research as it underpins my perception of the world. Tracey Moon (2008: 77) explains that with reflexivity there is “this challenge in mind that I approach the process of reflexivity, in order to understand how both my contextual history and the contextual history of the data used affects any knowledge claims that I make regarding any findings.” Reflexivity is a process of “writing the self into the research” as Steven Pace (2012: 1) states. I wrote myself into this research as a woman who had undergone *amafunde* before I got married, in order to better understand and reflect on the experiences and cultural context of *amafunde yambusa* for married Bemba career women in the Copperbelt province. Writing myself into this study was significant because as Faith Ngunjiri, Kathy-Ann Hernandez and Heewon Chang (2010: 1) have explained, using data “about self and its context to gain an understanding of the connectivity between self and others within the same context” is necessary in qualitative research. Using my experiences as a Bemba, married, career woman who underwent *amafunde*, there is a connection of experiences with the participants in this study. Ngunjiri et al (2010: 2) argue that separating oneself from research is a difficult task as “Scholarship is inextricably connected to self – personal interest, experience, and familiarity.”

6.2. Participants’ and Researcher’s Social Position

David Resnik (2009: 40)¹¹⁵ has convincingly argued that research is never completely unbiased. Research is rooted in the constitution of social identities. Participants and researchers present themselves in a specific way, consciously or unconsciously. Hence, the process of data collection and production is influenced by who the researcher is, how she or he represents her/himself, and how the participants perceive her/him. Feminist scholars have significantly researched the possibility of

¹¹⁵ See also Reinharz (1992).

whether or not the insider or the outsider¹¹⁶ will conduct better and more accountable research. Some scholars assert that researchers from the same culture and ethnicity as the participants have an advantage in approaching research participants and produce more balanced views than outsider researchers (Wolf, 1996; Patai, 1991). Other scholars have also systematically argued that insider researchers can be outsiders depending on their class or education, or their socio-cultural standpoint in the field (Ong, in Wolf 1996: 17). Even though the arguments above are relevant, it is more productive to centre on the researcher's relationship with the participants rather than focus on the insider/outsider binaries, because the trust relationship between researcher and participants brings openness into the feminist interview space. Hence, while the production of the data is made easier, the participants have the freedom to respond without feeling intimidated or forced. This does not mean that being a Bemba and married woman made the interview process easy for me. Some participants were suspicious of me coming from South Africa¹¹⁷ and being more educated, and my intentions of researching and interviewing these Bemba women were questioned even though I had verbally explained the purpose. This was however not surprising for me because often insiders tend to despise some cultural contexts of their countries after gaining education outside of their countries.

Locating one's position in the process of research is critical (Jackson 1993: 211). Johnston et al (2000: 60) state that the declaration of a researcher's position is central to analysis that is experience centered moreso than research that is distanced from the participants. This is because in the process of analysis, the researcher analyses the participants as well as her/his own experiences. It is necessary for me as a researcher to give my social identity and/or the way I position myself with respect to the participants. Like Womba Mayondi (2014: 35), "I am also interested in questioning male dominance in the work place and in corporate institutions, government departments and the communities in Zambia", which is why this study focuses on married career women of Zambia and their experiences in the work place. Mushibwe (2009: 152) has explained that the researcher needs to be knowledgeable of the research he/she is conducting, therefore being a Bemba married woman who has undergone the teachings was a benefit that led to the trust from the women participants. If I (as the researcher) had not undergone these teachings or had I been single (not married) this would

¹¹⁶ See also Nnaemeka Obioma and Ezeilo Joy (2005).

¹¹⁷ South Africa is more affluent than Zambia on many levels.

have been problematic as the women would not have shared anything with me. Rose (1993: 11) stresses that “women cannot escape from the ‘Woman figure’ and this figure gives them a subject position”. It must be noted that to a great extent, my positionality is influenced by the fact that I am a woman. I was born and bred in the Copperbelt province of Zambia, and women on the Copperbelt undergo *imbusa* teachings (or its equivalent for other ethnic groups) before they get married. I underwent *amafunde* at the age of twenty-two years old, a month before my wedding. This information (I had to share with the participants that I have been taught) was important to gain access to the participants. It meant that they could trust me to not “steal or plagiarize” their knowledge and wisdom because only those who are taught can have access to such information. Like plagiarism in academic circles, a woman that is untaught cannot enter into an *imbusa* space because she would be “plagiarizing” if she does not come to the space the acceptable way.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, some participants would say that such information is expensive. I had to explain to such participants that I was not directly dealing with the content of the teachings; rather the outcomes of *amafunde* was my focus. There were times that women would refer to personal experiences or those of other people they knew, and this was only possible because they knew I had undergone the teachings, as well and therefore I was able to understand or relate to certain experiences. I was also aware that coming from a university in South Africa (more affluent than Zambia), the participants would be suspicious of whether I would “sell them out”, a point raised by Mayondi (2014: 35).

My positionality is multi-layered as I am a Pentecostal Christian¹¹⁹ woman (and married to a pastor). I believe in gender equality, women’s empowerment and social and gender justice for all.¹²⁰ Finally, my awareness of how challenging it would be to represent the participants’ views in this dissertation and present their voice was constantly at the back of my mind throughout the process of writing.

¹¹⁸ The acceptable way is to have the bride’s parents request *banacimbasa* to teach their daughter; this is called *ukulomba amano* (seeking wisdom) (Chondoka 2000, Richards 1982, Rasing 1995).

¹¹⁹ I committed myself in 1997 at age 14 to cultivate a personal relationship with God and being Pentecostal, I also speak in tongues. Most of the participants (who are also Pentecostal Christians) were familiar with me as we could relate on many issues. I critically engage with my Christian faith and reflect on my personal stand as a woman who is also married to a pastor.

¹²⁰ The Pentecostal teaching on marriage has tended to focus on women submitting to their husbands and I was quite surprised when the Pentecostal women I interviewed talked about subverting those kind of teachings. They spoke of empowering women and doing away with some aspects of the teachings that were suppressive for women. This I must confess has been consistent with Zambian Pentecostalism; the problem comes when one talks of gender equality as often women and men insist that men and women will never be equal.

Feminist epistemologies strive to “bring emancipatory social change and empowering virtues to the researched” which is what I had hoped would happen to the participants during the research process (Mayondi 2014: 35).¹²¹ Kapwepwe (1994: 144) has said *icuupo tacipilibuka, lelo bantu nenshitaa efipilibuka* (meaning that marriage does not change, it is people and time that change). The Copperbelt communities have been a bit slow in moving with the times and changes that are happening in the world. Kapwepwe (1994: 144) stresses that we should “not deceive ourselves that traditions do not change, it changes according to the progress of the community”.

6.2.1. Participants’ Position

As stated earlier, the participants in this study are married Bemba career women living on the Copperbelt province of Zambia. Married Bemba career women hold onto traditional *imbusa* teachings and advocate that all women should be taught before entering into marriage. Being career women, they spend most of their time at work and sometimes miss out on family time, especially those with children. All the interviewed women consented to the audio recording and were enthusiastic about the study. As women who have been through *amafunde*, they also wanted to find out from me what my thoughts were before the interviews. I promised to share my stand after the interview because I did not want to influence, change and alter their ideas, which at that point were of greater importance than mine. Being career women, some of them work long hours and some women worked on Saturdays as well. They have Sunday as family day, hence, most of them opted to have the interview at their place of work which I gladly obliged to as it would give me a glimpse into their day at work and how they interact with male colleagues. To a large extent, I would say that women presented themselves in the way that their socio-cultural context influenced and impacted them. The barriers that may have been encountered in the process of data collection are closely related to socio-cultural and gendered confinements that Bemba women who have undergone *imbusa* teachings experience and identify with. Indeed, the construction of knowledge is a multi-layered process (cf. Nencel 1998: 15; Chilisa 2012), similarly, there is more to the participants than just being married career women, and they are influenced by a lot more than that.

¹²¹ See also Shulamit Reinhaz (1992) and Avtar Brah & Ann Phoenix et al (2005).

6.2.2. Fieldwork Experiences

During my time in Zambia in October and November 2014, I stayed with a childhood friend, June and her husband (whom I will call Samuel Sampa). June is a high school teacher and her husband has a high position in the mining sector, in one of the biggest Copper producing mines in the world, Konkola Copper Mines (the name was formally changed from Zambia Consolidated copper mine). Samuel was enthusiastic about my study and told me he had found a friend that works in the mines as well, and she was interested in the interviews. Arrangements were made and Samuel's friend gave me a date to go and interview her at work. Samuel, my friend's spouse gave me a lift to the interview venue. At the gate, I had to obtain a visitor's card, which I did. Then I needed to get out of the vehicle, which was a safety and security procedure that all visitors go through in order for the security personnel to check whether I was in safety clothing for the mine I was about to enter. Apparently, Samuel had forgotten to inform me earlier about this procedure; that I needed closed shoes so that I would not get hurt in case there was anything like explosions or nails falling on me etc. I was wearing high heels that were open in front. The security person was female and Samuel refused that I should get out of the car for the examination, as "we were late for an interview". She tried to press the matter, but Samuel was the boss and male so she gave up and let me pass without being searched for proper shoes that are allowed into the mines. I would not have had an interview that day and we would have rescheduled if this power dynamic did not exist between my friend's spouse and the security person. Even though I knew that this was for my safety, I was also unwilling to have to postpone my interview. As we drove passed her, I could see disappointment on the security person's face. However, the place of the interview was just right after the gate where the security guard needed to search me. I noticed that the participant was also wearing open shoes as her toes were showing; it was a safe place as there were no explosions occurring there. Yet I was left to wonder at how many people go in as I did with hidden agendas or come out with things they should not take from there. Since some of the interviews were carried out in the participants' offices, I witnessed first-hand how the participants work with their male colleagues who are under their supervision.

6.3. Location of the Study

This research was located in Chingola, a town on the Copperbelt province of Zambia where I was born and bred. It is “approximately 51 kilometres west of Kitwe, the central city of the Copperbelt province” according to Musongole (2010: 8). It is also home to the biggest opencast mine in Africa and was once known as the cleanest town in Zambia (Mwakikagile (2010: 183; Musongole 2010). Chingola has a population of approximately 179,219 people and a growth rate of 0.5% per annum in 2010 (Musongole 2010: 38). Of these, 49.89% are females and 50.11% are males. These are from all ethnic groups in Zambia not just the Bemba.

The peri-urban parts of Chingola are sparsely populated and dominated by peasant farmers while the urban area is densely populated and dominated by miners. Of the total population of the district, about 91,599 are males while 87,620 are females. This high male number could be attributed to the adult male migration into the district in search of job opportunities in the mines, which seem to attract more males than females even now. In the colonial era, men were the only workers in the mines hence the migration of numerous men from their villages into the Copperbelt province.

6.4. Data Analysis: Process and Methods

This section discusses the data analysis and the processes that were employed in this study. Wolcott (1994) describes data analysis as a process of transforming raw data into insights about a subject under study (Wolcott, 1994). In this study, Bemba career women’s navigation and negotiation of *imbusa* in their daily lives was the subject. I used thematic analysis to analyse the participants’ perceptions of these teachings.

6.4.1. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is mostly utilised in analysing qualitative data. Although many scholars do not recognize it as a distinct method, Braun and Clarke (2006: 7) have argued that thematic analysis “should be considered as a method in its own right”. Thematic analysis is also inductive because

themes have to be created from collected data. In this study, themes have been created from Bemba married career women's negotiations of *imbusa* teachings in their daily lives at home and places of work. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 10), "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set." For this study, it means that selected themes arise from responses that were similar between participants and that were responses to the research question. Further, Braun and Clarke (2006: 15) clarify that "thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set – be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts – to find repeated patterns of meaning." Utilising thematic analysis, I sought for repeated patterns and responses from participants and came up with themes that I then used as subheadings of the findings.

6.4.2. African Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics

African feminist cultural hermeneutics was vital in interpreting the produced data. It was a lens through which an understanding of Bemba career women's negotiation of the *imbusa* teachings in their daily lives was established. For this research, Musimbi Kanyoro's (2002) African feminist hermeneutics, further elaborated by Phiri and Nadar (2006), was utilized as a lens through which to view Bemba women's negotiation of *amafunde yambusa*; feminist cultural hermeneutics suggests that culture is not completely life-denying, therefore, it is important to uphold life-giving while rejecting life-denying aspects of culture. While culture has had negative impacts on women of various societies, culture also has positive and protective mechanisms for women. While culture has been utilized in oppressing women, culture still has life-giving elements. African feminist cultural hermeneutics significantly helped to bring Bemba women's experiences to the fore. This is in line with Anne Clifford's (2005:27) explanation that women do not experience discrimination in the same way just because they are all women; their experiences are diverse. Maynard (2004: 135) also shows that analysis for feminists is diverse; some take the interview at face value and let the story speak for itself, others treat the interview as a text needing no interpretation. In this study, I focus on understanding the significance of meanings that women's actions and experiences link and connect to social reality (Maynard 2004: 135). As such, feminist cultural hermeneutics as defined by

Musimbi Kanyoro (2002a: 26)¹²² is the method of analysis that seeks to challenge “cultural socialization by rejecting the assumption that the roles of men and women have been fixed, either by the Creator or culture”. Feminist cultural hermeneutics fits well with the focus on Bemba women’s experiences. While women around the globe have started telling stories of their experiences and writing about their experiences, these experiences are not universal (Phiri and Nadar, 2006:8; see also Kanyoro, 2002). Mama (2008: 12) emphasizes that “Knowledge is about power and as feminists we need to disrupt the organization of knowledge that perpetuates the status quo. We need to ‘herstorice’ our experiences and struggles so that we can locate our struggles against patriarchy on those of our fore mothers”. Therefore, African women telling their stories¹²³ as custodians of culture (Kanyoro 2002b: 159) gives them control of their own lives and experiences. While it is true that most rituals are performed on or because of women, as Oduyoye (2006: 15)¹²⁴ notes, there are rituals that are enriching for women. African feminist cultural hermeneutics suggests analysing women’s rituals from a gendered angle. Oduyoye (2001: 115) acknowledges that while culture has been a source of oppression to African women, there are some positive values that gives African women their identity. Hence, I sought the opinions of Bemba women on how *imbusa* teachings have shaped their experiences in their homes and workplace. In doing this, I acknowledge participants’ and researcher’s interpretations of the collected data; I sent the produced data back to the participants after I transcribed the interviews and none of them had any questions or sought to have anything changed from their responses during the interview. No one responded to my emails even after I followed up; I concluded that it is either because they were busy or had no objections. I sought to show whether the *imbusa* teachings are a form of teaching that seeks to liberate Bemba women in their homes, work place and society. Kanyoro (2002: 9)¹²⁵ explains that cultural hermeneutics construes how culture socializes people’s understanding of reality at a given time and place. In short, cultural hermeneutics encourages women’s voice to be raised; women tell their experiences, so that should ritual and cultural practices be oppressive, they can be transformed. Therefore, utilizing this as an interpretive tool, I thematically analyzed women’s views of the *imbusa*. In dealing with Bemba career married women’ cultural teachings, I recognized that rites are often seen as oppressive to women. Hence, I sought to find out whether the *imbusa* contains teachings that necessitate social

¹²² See also Oduyoye (2000).

¹²³ This study did not use narrative as a method of interviewing, however, through the process of interviewing, women would often tell their stories in the examples they gave of their experiences.

¹²⁴ See also Kanyoro (2002b: 159).

¹²⁵ See also Rakoczy (2004:166) and Pui-Lan (2001).

transformation for married women, as Oduyoye (2001: 12) earlier explained, not only in their marriages but also in their place of work and community. Phiri and Nadar (2006: 8) have argued that experiences are a starting point of African women's theologies. Hence, I analyzed Bemba career women's lived experiences within their marriages, places of work, as well as society, to show how women stand in solidarity with one another during *imbusa* teachings, and whether this solidarity ends at the time of teachings or continues as a form of marriage mentorship. Further, African women theologians like Kanyoro (2002b: 159) have explained that women's experiences, however diverse they may be, are a source for ethics. In this way, I therefore explored as well as exposed Bemba career women's socio-economic factors that have shaped their experiences.

6.5. Piloting the Study

Before setting off to Zambia to carry out the fieldwork, I sent an email to the director - Human Resources for Zanaco (Zambia National Commercial bank) requesting her to take part in an interview for this study. Her response was that she would be out of the country from October and would only be back in mid-December; she then asked if I could email her the research instrument. I sent¹²⁶ her the research instrument and her feedback was very useful. As a result of this email exchange, I was able to rework the research instrument accordingly. This was a deliberate action as I intended to test the adequacy of the research instrument in producing data that would help to answer the key research question. There was also the need to gauge how appropriate the questions were. The other intention was to get an idea of what potential problems could be encountered in the field regarding the research instrument. Sampson (2004: 383) explains that although pilot studies:

...can be used to refine research instruments such as questionnaires and interview schedules they have greater use... in foreshadowing research problems and questions, in highlighting gaps and wastage in data collection, and in considering broader and highly significant issues such as research validity, ethics, representation, and researcher health and safety.

¹²⁶ I sent her the same research instrument and asked her to answer as many questions as she could.

After receiving feedback from the ‘pilot’, I concurred with Sampson’s observation above, as I was to take note of irrelevant questions and rework my interview schedule. The next section discusses the methodological limitations of the study.

6.5.1. Further Considerations

It is inevitable for a study to have limitations in research; this section describes the limitations encountered in this study. The first limitation of this study was that it only dealt with Bemba women who have been through *imbusa* initiation rite who had also been to university/college and are currently employed. During fieldwork, some of the women who are personally known to me wanted to take part in the research; unfortunately, they were of different ethnicities and could not participate on that account. They explained to me that most of the teachings they went through have been “Bembalised” in that many ethnic groups have embraced the *imbusa* teachings and in urban areas like Chingola, they usually call the teachings *imbusa* and *ichisungu*, which are all Bemba terms. In the same vein, some of the stay-at-home wives (Bemba) also wanted to take part and expressed the desire for their voices to be heard. One specifically said to me that *“just because we have not gone to college does not mean we cannot express ourselves in how these teachings have changed us.”* With this scope, the sample left out voices of career women from different ethnicities and stay-at-home wives, which could have added another dimension to the study and are, therefore, possible areas for further inquiry. Nevertheless, during the course of informal conversations, it slowly became clear that some of the early answers had been incomplete or even deceptive. It should be noted that no matter how incomplete or ambiguous, these illustrations were essential to the analysis, because the motivations and implications behind them exposed significant aspects of women’s socio-cultural experiences.

Further, in using feminist research, hierarchy within the researcher-participant relationship was reduced; since I am also a Bemba woman who has undergone these teachings, it helped the participants to gain trust. However, Christina Hughs (2002:60) questions the validity of feminist’s stance that women interviewing women reduces hierarchy, as there is always the class issue concerning how much one earns, or how much education the participant and researcher has. In my own case, the fact that I am a Bemba woman who has undergone the teachings helped reduce the tension of the fact that I was coming from a different country that is more affluent than Zambia.

Trust is important because in the course of the interviews, participants may have to refer to their personal experiences and in order to do that effectively there has to be a level of trust between researcher and participant. Therefore, trust was established (to a degree), as the women were being introduced to me by those who are known to me researcher and known to them. In order to gain the participants' trust, I also leveraged the fact that I am a Christian married to a pastor, because the "Christian nation" stance has been strongly used in Zambia. With the statistics that eighty percent of Zambians are Christians, it was therefore not surprising that only one out of the seventeen women I interviewed was not a Christian or affiliated to any religious faith.

Second, interviewing these career women meant that I needed to be conversant with my topic, both on *amafunde yambusa* and career women. One woman in fact critiqued my study when she argued that "*A Bemba woman has always been a career woman in that she would go to the field and work to provide for her family. You are calling us career women now because we go to universities and have to sit in offices.*" There were also ethical considerations in the process of the fieldwork, as the next section demonstrates.

6.6. Ethical Considerations

One vital aspect of research ethics is to make sure that research participants are not harmed in any way. Research participants can be harmed in three ways: mentally, physically and legally. That is why it is necessary for the researcher to protect them from such harm. Wassenaar (2006: 61) alludes to this and further stresses that research ethics goes beyond “the welfare of the research participants and extends into areas such as scientific misconduct and plagiarism”. These principles were adhered to in this study. The research did not involve any physical harm for the participants directly or indirectly, the study did not involve any mental harm as the study involved no procedures that would cause discomfort or injury to participants. The participants for example, were not asked about their relationships with their spouses, despite the fact that the *imbusa* teachings are focused on that relationship.

Martin Terre-Blanche (1999: 51) explains that collected data “should capture the meaning of the concept under investigation”. My focus was on Bemba married career women of Zambia and finding out their views on how they negotiate *amafunde yambusa* in their daily lives. Following Wassenaar (1999: 63), the research “participants’ dignity and welfare” rose above the interest of the research so that their rights remained dignified. I assured the participants of confidentiality. The participants were also made aware that should they feel the need to discontinue with the interviews, there would be no penalty and I that would only interview them with their consent. Permission for audio recording was sought and if they declined for whatever reason, I would then take notes after asking their permission. Fortunately, no one refused to be recorded, except one who was very nervous, as she did not know who would listen in on the interview. After I assured her that it is just to support me in my writing process, as I would not remember everything that we would talk about, and then she gave her consent. Their real names are not used; rather I have used pseudonyms in order that the participants remain “anonymous”. Donna Martens (2002:19) has shown that there are instances where revealing the participants’ names can be harmful. That is why I have given the participants pseudonyms and given the participants my interpreted work to read through (at their request) in case they need to emphasize, correct or change what they said earlier. However, the interpreted work was only given to participants who requested to see it for corrections and

additional information afterward. I also ensured that participants were well informed in advance and had volunteered to take part in the study, as Eagle (2002: 443) has stipulated. I have attached the consent form and interview schedule (see appendices 1 and 4). The interview process did not invade the spiritual position of the participants; even those that are pastors or pastors' wives were not asked concerning their faith and spiritual standing. The interviews were concerned with the private and public spaces of women after *amafunde yambusa*.

In addition, while the interview schedule was written in English, during the process of data collection, the participants were asked to choose what language should be used, and they all agreed to be interviewed in English. However, they would respond in Bemba for clarification or emphasis whenever necessary. This was necessary as I intended to give the participants freedom to express themselves in the language with which they were comfortable. One of the participants got offended that I even asked her in what language the interview should be done. Since I was coming from South Africa, she felt like I was implying that she is incapable of speaking English. In so doing, their autonomy, dignity and respect was ensured, and the process of research upheld rights, "such as their right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality" (Sarandakos, 2005: 19; Wassenaar, 2006: 68; Denscombe, 2002). The purpose of the research was explained to them as well as the importance of their participation as they had knowledge that was important to this study.

An invitation to participate in an interview is intrusive and obtrusive for the participants because depending on the nature of the research, it may require them to share their most intimate details. I was mindful of this fact, hence, the assurance of the participants' anonymity (Marshall & Rossman 2006). In one case, one of the participants had agreed to do the interview in the morning. On the day of the interview, the participant was running late to come to the office. I waited for an hour and when she finally arrived, I had to wait an extra hour so she could organize her work schedule before we could proceed with the interview and while the interview was going on, she asked me to stop the recording so she could send a male colleague to order lunch for the company. Nevertheless, the interview was so informative and beneficial and being one of those women who teach the Christianised *imbusa*, she seemed to have all her answers at hand. This is an example of how obtrusive and intrusive research can be in general, as it interferes with the official and personal operations of the participants. As the Bembas would say *unpamfwe eulwa nechibi*, literally meaning that

‘a person in desperate need is the one who struggles to open the door.’¹²⁷ I was bound to wait and not be impatient with the participants as Denscombe (2002: 179) cautions researchers to be sensitive with their participants.

Finally, Wassenaar (2006: 61) explains the need for the research to benefit the research participants or the society in some way. This study may not directly benefit the research participants, however, the participants showed enthusiasm of wanting to go and share some of our discussions with others. In fact, I was invited to a church after an interview with one pastor or faith-community leader. They have Bible study from half past eight to nine before the Sunday church service, and on that particular Sunday, they changed their Bible study to discuss careers. This is the first step toward having the society benefit from the research.

6.7. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed and justified the research design, focussing on methodology and methods employed to produce and analyse data. The first part discussed the data-production process with a focus on methodology; participants and sampling procedure; and research methods, namely, in-depth feminist interviews. The second part discussed the data analysis process, focussing on thematic analysis of the qualitative data using African feminist cultural hermeneutics. The last part of the chapter dealt with piloting the study, validity and rigour, and ethical considerations of the study. The next chapter is a critical analysis of how Bemba women in Chingola negotiate *amafunde yambusa* at work. This will not be a descriptive analysis; rather it will critically engage with authors of women and work in Africa and beyond.

In the following chapter, I analyse the findings and demonstrate what it means to be a Bemba career married woman in the 21st century in the globalised Copperbelt province of Zambia. How does one balance between being a Bemba cultured married woman and simultaneously educated within westernised forms of education? This aligns with the second research question that this study raises,

¹²⁷ For instance if one is late and finds that they are locked in and cannot go out, they will fight till the door opens.

which is: How do career married women learn, negotiate, and resist *amafunde yambusa* in their homes and at places of work?

CHAPTER SEVEN

NAVIGATING *IMBUSA* IN SOCIAL OR PUBLIC SPHERES: BEMBA MARRIED WOMEN, WORK AND AGENCY

Even in the village, there were times of gardening for women, there were no offices but women had a career in the fields, in the fields the woman planted various foods and used their hands to provide for their families because they never used to buy food long time ago... Today things have just changed because we are going to school and university, get educated and because this time there is education, and therefore we even change names and say career women!! – Delfister Ngosa (October 2014).¹²⁸

7.0. Introduction

The quote above is from one of the participants in this study. She explicitly and succinctly argued that Bemba women have always been working hard, and are currently called career women simply because they get to work from offices. In precolonial Zambia, Bemba women received education from *imbusa* teachings and were working to provide for their families. Even in the colonial era, while the Bemba men were migrating for wage paying labour in the Copperbelt province, as Ault (1981) has explained, women remained in the village caring and providing for the family. This study has intentionally focused on Bemba women who have been to college or university and are working at the time of the interviews. Bemba women, like other ethnic groups within Zambia, look forward to *imbusa* teachings as they prepare for marriage. Kapwepwe (1994: 4) writes, *mumwaka umo wine banjitile pa university of Zambia pakuti intitibile pa lwa fibeledo fyesu*, translated as “in the same year I was called at the University of Zambia to go and teach emphasising on our tradition”. Bemba women and most if not all Zambian women still look forward to undergoing the *imbusa* teachings before they are married just as the women during the time Kapwepwe was called upon to teach University of Zambia (UNZA) students. The participants in this study also stated that these are important teachings that should not be neglected. Delfister Ngosa for instance emphasised that “*preparation for woman getting in marriage is so important because those are skills*”. Mulenga Mukupa¹²⁹ another participant also explains, “*I feel it’s a good thing and personally I’d encourage all young women to go through it before they get married.*” It is important to understand why an educated, career woman would want to go through

¹²⁸ Delfister Ngosa interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office, October 2014.

¹²⁹ Mulenga Mukupa interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home, 9 November 2014.

such teachings that are often seen to be only relevant for uneducated rural women, but for the Bemba women, it is the essence of the social status of a woman. *Imbusa* is fundamental to Bemba people's worldview, because a woman for the Bemba people makes a home and is a custodian of Bemba tradition and culture. After undergoing the rite of *imbusa*, she has the responsibility of passing on that tradition to younger Bemba women. Hence, she needs to undergo some form of education on how to take care of the home as well as how to appropriate the Bemba traditions. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that women's lived experiences form African feminism. Wane (2011: 7) stresses that feminism in Africa is "African Indigenous ways of knowing which are holistic and not compartmentalized into neat piles but more fused together." Those women who have received the same teaching continually share their experiences of *imbusa* during the initiation rite. Phiri and Nadar (2006)¹³⁰ have argued that women's experiences are a foundation of African feminism/s; therefore, women's experiences are important to the work of African feminists despite their experiences being diverse.

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated the methodology that was utilised in the process of data production in this study. In this chapter, data will be presented and analysed focusing on how Bemba women navigate *imbusa* in public/social spheres. This aligns with the main research question of this study: "How do married Bemba career women engage with the traditional cultural curriculum of marriage (*amafunde yambusa*) in their daily lives at home and workplace?" Both of these questions sought to analyse Bemba women's agency in the workplace and how they intentionally navigate the workplace. Recent literature demonstrates how more men fill workplace public/social spheres than women do, and it is not until the recent past that women started climbing the corporate ladder.¹³¹ I refer to workplace as public/social spheres because it is an institutional arena of interaction and engagement not only on the question of political participation; but on the public sphere has an aspect of social participation in economic activity that serves human wellbeing and social progress and development. Joan Landes (1988: 2) celebrates what she terms "the collapse of older patriarchy" that has given "way to more pervasive gendering of the workplace social spheres for French women". Public/social spheres have become open to women in Zambia as well, although these spaces remain entrenched in problematic gender power relations mirroring the colonial historical

¹³⁰ See also Kanyoro (2002); Nnaemeka (2003).

¹³¹ Betsch, and Guy-Sheftall (2003); Bell (1997, 2000); Johnson (2001); Valian (1999).

experiences of the Bemba people. Bearing this in mind, it is important in understanding how Bemba career women are striving to negotiate *imbusa* teaching in the workplace social spheres.

Unfortunately, *imbusa* teachings appear to have been reduced to private domestic spheres since the colonial times and in contact with diverse cultures on the Copperbelt province. Thus, when one speaks of *amafunde yambusa*, this is immediately understood as teachings that prepare women to take care of their marriage – the perspective of most of the participants in the interviews. Undoubtedly, marriage undergirds the *imbusa* teachings because according to the Bemba people, it is the wellspring of community life and social activities such as politics, work, education or social interaction (Kapwepwe 1994). In Bemba cosmology, marriage is to be preserved above everything else for it was the bedrock of social transformation and community progress. In fact, the timing of the teachings is right before a woman has her wedding. The pertinent question is, what does *imbusa* have to do with the public/social spheres, specifically, the workspace? Scholars on Bemba history have demonstrated that the Bemba pre-colonial *imbusa* curriculum was holistic, it involved issues of religion, politics, economy, ecology/environment, history, art, music, other disciplines, and most important, there was the Bemba women's agency (Poewe 1981)¹³². The Bemba women were the apex of Bemba society as owners of their households and some of the women held political positions as chiefs or heads of their particular village within the Bemba political kingdom. Thus, they were involved in the social spheres. Michael Burawoy (2009: 118) argued that the Bemba women were more resourceful and involved in the political life of the Bemba kingdom than scholars like Richard had acknowledged. Nevertheless, in postcolonial Zambia, *imbusa* seems to be functioning as a weapon of the powerful and not the weak. This is because *imbusa* has been relegated to the private domain thereby; women are constructed to function in private spheres than public spheres whether they have acquired formal academic education and have careers or have little or no education at all. As one of the participants explained, *imbusa* teaching in pre-colonial Bemba was a process that started when the girl child was still tender, to socialize and conscientize her into Bemba epistemologies and what it means to be a Bemba woman in the changing society (Delfister Ngosa 2014).¹³³ Yet in contemporary Bemba society, even in social spheres, women are most often

¹³² See also Hinfelaar (1991) and (1994); Kaunda (2010).

¹³³ Delfister Ngosa (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office at Revelation Pentecostal Church of Zambia, 14th October.

expected to be submissive to the corporate dominant male. How does this work when a woman is a boss to a man at the workplace? It is a tension because in the teachings of *imbusa*, a woman is taught to respect other men as well as her husband, just as Esnart Ng'andwe (2014)¹³⁴ one of the participants explained:

'When you talk of respect it's not only the husband; even at work, you are taught that when you are home with your husband and his friends it's better to put on icitenge (traditional wrapping cloth) so even at work we become conscious since we were taught that you don't pass where men are if you are in a mini skirt.'

This chapter examines whether women find *imbusa* teachings helpful in the work place and whether *imbusa* encourages them to advance in their careers.¹³⁵ Finally, I demonstrate how Bemba career women are taking initiatives to creatively navigate *amafunde yambusa* in order to function as partners with their male colleagues in the work environment, thereby gendering the workplace. Using feminist interviews, and consistently relating to the research problem, objectives and theoretical framework of this study, this chapter analysed women's agency in their workplace – especially their navigation of *amafunde yambusa* in the workplace. The following are the three emerging themes from the produced data: *banacimbusa* do not care about a woman having a career; equally, an unmarried woman is perceived as having poor decision-making skills in the workplace; and women have to prove that they are equal to the task.

7.1. Theorizing Work: A Feminist Cultural Epistemology

African feminists have explained how one cannot talk about African women without referring to culture and their cultural experiences (Phiri and Nadar, 2006 and Wane, 2005). As explained in chapter two, in the precolonial era, *imbusa* was a matricentric moral source on which the traditional Bemba community was governed. Writing from an African theological perspective, Kenneth Mtata (2011) notes a connection between the spheres of culture and work. He argues that work is one significant area in which African cultures have found their greatest expressions. The ultimate purpose of work is not merely to meet human basic needs, but also to affirm the intrinsic worth of a

¹³⁴ Esnart Ng'andwe (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda, interviewed at her workplace in the staff room (November).

¹³⁵ While *imbusa* teachings are marital teachings, women's experiences in the workplace have been that their male colleagues and at times even female colleagues expect married Bemba women to behave according to the teachings of *imbusa* even at work.

person. Work can therefore be a place of affirmation or alienation. It can be argued that work is embedded in cultural spaces where meaning is derived. In traditional African societies, work was done communally and every member of the household constituted a workforce unit, resulting in mutual respect and appreciation. It is important to also highlight that work was embedded in African religio-cultural wisdom and philosophy. As Mtata (2011: 38) affirms “whether the hunter had good dogs, the farmer had many cattle to plough the field, or one had a great voice to sing, in order to be successful in one’s work, Africans believed in the final capital that came from the spiritual world, be they Ancestors or God or other benevolent powers”. The spiritual awareness pervades every aspect of reality within African traditional social life.¹³⁶ John Mbiti (1990:2) argues that:

Wherever the African is, there is his [sic] religion: he (sic) carries it to the fields where he (sic) is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he (sic) takes it with him (sic) to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him (sic) to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he (sic) takes it to the house of parliament. Although many African languages do not have a word for religion as such, it nevertheless accompanies the individual from long before his (sic) birth to long after his (sic) physical death.

Religion and spirituality colour not just work but every aspect of an African’s being. Thus, work and religion are perceived as interconnected, an understanding that is deeply entrenched within traditional *imbusa* teaching as well. The Bemba women know that they are expected to be taught how to behave as married women. In fact, Kapwepwe (1994: 6) explained how, when he was speaking to University of Zambia female students concerning marriage and progress, they indicated their intention and desire to go through *amafunde* when they were to be married. *Imbusa* was specifically to prepare a bride for marriage and community life. Life lessons that her parents or guardians may have already started teaching her were re-taught and re-inforced, in readiness for marriage and taking up social responsibility as a mature and grown up woman. AlthouWane’s (2011: 9) argues, “In Africa, feminism did not develop in an academic setting, but in the villages where the inclusion of women was evident in the social, economic, ritual, and political spheres.” *Imbusa* in precolonial times lasted six months as Kapwepwe (1994) notes; in that time, if it was a course in an academic setting, one would acquire a certificate. African feminist work ethics can be constructed through understanding

¹³⁶ Evans-Pritchard (1956); Parrinder (1953); Parrinder (1954, 1962); Mbiti (1975, 1990); Idowu (1962, 1973); Magesa (1997).

that the “bonds women had with other women”, in precolonial times, which engendered a feminist work ethic, were underpinned by the collective consciousness of women or “unified collective thought” (Wane 2011: 9). Bemba women were aware that culture is pervasive and informs work relations (Hinfelaar, 1994). Therefore, through *imbusa*, Bemba women constructed their agency that was adequate to function in the social spheres as equal labourers with their male counterparts. African feminists have rightly explained that African women’s experiences are a basis for a feminist work ethic (Wane 2011).

Raising awareness of gender equality concerns through various campaigns and workshops have been on the rise in Zambia; women’s lobby groups/organizations have been formed to promote women’s empowerment, such as the Forum for African Educationalists of Zambia (FAWEZA), Zambia National Women’s Lobby (ZNWL), Women for Change (WFC), Women’s League (WL), and Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED). Most of these focus on girl child education. There are other women’s groups that have focused on women’s rights such as Zambia Association of University Women (ZAUW), Zambia Alliance of Women (ZAW), Zambia National Women Artists Documentation Project (ZNWADP), Women in the Media (WM), Business and Professional Women (BPW), and Medical Women’s Association of Zambia (ZWAM). This is not an exhaustive list, there are many more. Mushibwe (2009: 97) has argued, “These organizations [of women’s empowerment] are best considered to be manifestations of liberal feminism because of their aims and processes of change advocated for.” However, while all these women’s organizations have been formed and are doing their best in women’s empowerment, *imbusa* has not been critically considered as an institution, space or even methodology that can be utilized for women’s empowerment among the Bemba and other women in Zambia. This space is even more significant now than previously as most of the ethnic groups have started teaching women using the teaching content equivalent to *imbusa*, especially in the many cities around the country. As argued above, culture pervades every aspect of life and it can be argued that even contemporary workspaces in Zambia are not left out when dealing with culture. Traditional culture pervades both the public and private spheres.

A growing number of Bemba women, like African-American women as explained by Patricia Parker (1996: 189), “have broken through the glass ceiling and climbed over the concrete wall to assume positions of power and authority in dominant culture organizations”. Women have similar

experiences regarding certain aspects of life regardless of their race and ethnicity; for instance, regardless of the forces and powers that have tried to hinder Bemba women from reaching their full potential in work places, like the African-American “sisters”, they have still managed to break through and achieve. This is despite the fact that certain cultural aspects enforced by missionaries and colonial officials demand and most often expect a woman to stay home and take care of her family instead of being in employment. Nevertheless, more and more women are defying these “tainted” cultural¹³⁷ expectations to take up careers and be able to negotiate and navigate patriarchal stereotypes in their workplaces. The corporate space has predominantly been for men; for Bemba people, colonial officials preferred to have a male work force, which meant Bemba women were sidelined from gainful employment and left to take care of their homes and family. The difference is, while Bemba women were in their villages, they were working together with their spouse and produce for their families together. When they came to the city, they were sidelined and left only to care for family; and they now had to depend on their spouses for everything they needed. Women have mostly been sidelined out of employment or are working in the background of the public spaces. A married woman with children is expected to stay home and take care of the children rather than go for a professional job/career outside the home, since the colonial era among the Bemba. Maria Frahm-Arp (2014: 5) has made a similar observation in the South African context about Pentecostal women who have made decisions to seek wage-paying employment outside their homes. This is despite their churches’ teaching against women who have small children being employed outside the home, saying they should be at home to take care of their children.

The complexity of a culture that has been so influenced and by Western culture as well as various cultures within Zambia, concerning women and waged employment outside the home, leads to questions of whether *banacimbusa* are following this tainted culture or simply using their experiences as married women who have not been to colleges/universities. Bemba women’s identity is formed over a period, this means that they are socialized from the time they are young (Delfister Ngosa

¹³⁷ Bemba culture that was supportive of women in positions of power was tainted with patriarchy due to contact with other cultures and patrilineal ethnic groups.

2014).¹³⁸ As they are growing up, their parents or guardians keep on teaching them even before they undergo *amafunde yambusa* as one of the participants Delfister Ngosa (October 2014) explained. Lenka Vochocova (2008: 233) makes a similar argument concerning women in the journalism profession, stating that it is important to contemplate the cultural influence on career women's everyday life "to uncover specific meanings that people associated with their behavior". Vochocova (2008: 239) notes that the fact that more and more women are getting into careers does not mean they get more power and influence; women begin to negotiate and navigate lower salaries and positions in the company or institution. Such constructions and views of Bemba women led to increased scrutiny and domination of Bemba (African) women's emancipation by the colonialists. Bemba women were restricted from moving into cities without being in the company of their spouse or male relatives etc. (Ault 1983). African feminists like Chilisa (2012: 19)¹³⁹ have argued for postcolonial theories as "framework of belief systems that emanate from the lived experiences, values, and history of those belittled and marginalized Euro-Western research paradigms". Tamale (2005: 10) has argued that women's lives are controlled by "male domination through men's control of resources and their relatively greater economic power. The patriarchal family engenders these economic relations, in which men, as household heads, exercise control over the lives of women and children". This means that the workplace social spheres have been designed and fabricated largely for male progress and where women are in the workplace social spheres, they are expected to operate in a certain prescribed way that undermines their agency and subjectivities. For instance, a Bemba married career woman would be expected to treat men as she was taught in *imbusa* even at work. As one of the participants lamented:

'most males and most often even female colleagues would express opinions to a married woman that she is behaving or not behaving like someone who is taught.' (Esther Musama 2014).

A befitting example is when the then president of Zambia, His Excellency President Levy Mwanawasa, died in 2008; his grieving widow, Maureen Mwanawasa (a lawyer by profession), was

¹³⁸ Delfister Ngosa (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola Revelation Pentecostal Church (October).

castigated by Mr. Michael Sata for commenting on political matters instead of mourning her husband. Mr. Sata, the opposition leader (Patriotic Front PF) to the then ruling party (Movement for Multi part Democracy MMD), told the BBC'S focus on Africa programme that "It is her (Maureen Mwanawasa) who has turned the whole funeral into politics, a widow should stay at home to mourn not tour the country" (BBC 2008). Mr Sata further "sarcastically" stated that Maureen Mwanawasa should visit *alangizi* (a Chewa term for *banacimbusa*) because for her to comment on political issues during the time of mourning her husband implied that she was an uncultured woman. A woman who does that is referred to as *chuumbu munsholohwa*, a crookedly bent potato that if one tries to straighten; it would only break instead of straightening. Ironically, when Sata died as president of Zambia six years later, his widow, Dr Christine Kaseba, a medical doctor by profession, wanted to stand as candidate for presidential elections. Dr. Christine Kaseba's stance was met with similar sentiments from the public on social media. Some people even remembered her deceased husband's sentiments when Maureen Mwanawasa merely commented on the political status of the country at a similar time. On 20th November, 2014 *Zambian Watchdog* reported that "a concerned elderly citizen from Mununga village demanded that PF presidential aspirant Dr. Christine Kaseba vacates the state house to go and concentrate on her political career". The two cases above demonstrate that as a woman, one's career should not be as important as marriage; if anything, career has to wait while a woman mourns her husband and she should take time before going back to work. Bwembya Mutale of *Zambiatimes.com* strongly wrote on 20th November 2014 that:

President Sata is gone (MHSRIP). But even before cement at his Grave site dries up, the lid in PF (Patriotic Front party) has blown off. The Zambian people have come face to face with PF madness in its overflow. Leading the whole madness in overdrive is the compromised widow Christine Kaseba wickedly defying every norm, culture, decency, and moral values synonymous with genuinely afflicted family members mourning... When a loved husband dies, a responsible woman prioritises to unite the family and provide leadership under a new situation...Unfortunately, Kaseba has shown she is more interested in power. If condoned, this Jezebel spirit may eat our country.

If the late president Sata was considered the father of the nation, then his widow Kaseba was doing the right thing by submitting her candidature for the PF party's presidency. Whenever a woman defies what has become "cultural" norms and expectations, it is often pointed out that she has not respected or taken the marital teachings seriously. A married woman is expected by society to behave in a particular way that resonates with what is defined as culture and consequently, her status

as a married woman. Hence, Maureen Mwanawasa and Christine Kaseba-Sata were both castigated because they defied those expected norms. That is why this “concerned citizen” from Mununga village would demand that the widow be removed from the state house because the widow, by going to file for candidature, has not honoured the husband when she should be mourning. Such a widow is deemed to have no reason for staying in that house any longer. These two women referred to above are not only educated, they are public figures as well, yet, culturally they are expected to leave their careers and focus on mourning their husbands in order to honour their spouses. It is not only in matters of bereavement; women are expected to be more serene in the way they handle matters in almost all aspects of their lives.

Another example is from two of the participants who stressed that they wear *ifitenge* (traditional cloth) to cover themselves when wearing short dresses or skirts at work in order not to ‘tempt’ the men at the place of work. This is in order to give their male colleagues respect and not make the men feel uncomfortable while they are working. The Copperbelt province of Zambia, like many societies, is marked by the separation of public and private spheres. Tamale (2005: 9-11)¹⁴⁰ has explained that “The two spheres are highly gendered, with the former (public) inhabited by men and the locus of socially valued activities, such as politics and waged labor, while the latter (private) constitutes the mainly unremunerated and undervalued domestic activities performed by women.” In pre-colonial African societies, women and children were part of the labour force for the family; they all worked and contributed to the wellbeing of the family (Poewe, 1981). With the coming of colonialism, this all changed as women and children were forced to become dependents on their males, making the situation difficult because this means that in a family of, for instance, five, four people will be dependent on the salary wage of one person. With all the transformation during the colonial era, *imbusa* has been affected, as argued in chapters two and three. This however, does not mean that Bemba women have taken the change uncritically. They found ways of navigating and negotiating it. As Nnaemeka (2003: 378) has noted, African women use the same instrument that was meant for their oppression to find emancipation knowing “when to go round cultural land mines” and when to face them head on. Clement Katulushi (1999: 101) states that “African cultural continuity is perpetuated in the lives of Africans and ignoring tradition is akin to losing the African

¹⁴⁰ See also Osseina Alidou (2005: 10).

identity”. The participants argued that they underwent *amafunde* and later on began to negotiate these teachings as their experiences developed. African feminism critically analyses women’s experiences on a daily basis and aims at tackling issues that affect women’s lives in their daily activities. Work is part of Bemba women’s day-to-day experiences, and hence it is important to show how they navigate the work place. Wane (2011: 8) suggests “a need for an approach that is anchored in retrieval, revitalization or restoration of the African senses of indigenusness. That is, African people must reposition their cultural resource knowledge in order to appreciate the power of collective responsibility to tackle social issues”. For Bemba women, their social status is constructed in *amafunde yambusa* and affects their daily lives in various ways. My argument is that Bemba career womens’ unique cultural experiences, especially from *amafunde yambusa*, inform their participatory approach in the workplace. Mesh’al Metle (2002: 246)¹⁴¹ has pointed out for instance that issues of women in employment became important around the twentieth century as women began to infiltrate the labour force in large numbers. In the colonial and postcolonial Copperbelt province, women were expected to stay home and raise families. Parker (1996: 191)¹⁴² demonstrates that gender functions in the same way across all racial and cultural groups, overlooking the cultural traditions to which different race groups as well as ethnic cultural groups (for instance Bemba women) are socialized; which women from other race/ethnic cultural groups do not share. Phiri and Nadar (2006) have cogently argued that while women may have similar experiences, these experiences differ due to their cultural contexts and socialization.

Bemba women’s experiences of the Copperbelt province became a reason for them as women to subvert the colonial officials and missionaries’ expectations. Despite the pressure for women to stay home and care for their families, they have learnt that they will care for the families constructively if they are able to contribute to their wellbeing financially as well; hence, Bemba women have sought education and employment outside their homes. Nicky Gregson (2000: 312) explains that there is often a divide between the work space and the home; the workspace is usually celebrated while the home space is erased or not seen as of much importance. It is because of this that Tamale (2005: 12) argues that:

¹⁴¹ See also Parker (1996: 190).

¹⁴² See also Phiri and Nadar (2006).

Where there had been a blurred distinction between public and private life, colonial structures (legal and religious, for example) and policies (educational, for example) clarified and hardened this distinction, guided by an ideology that perceived men as public actors and women as private performers. Where domestic work had co-existed with commercial work in pre-colonial satellite households [in Africa], a new form of domesticity, which existed outside production, was constructed.

Since there is this divide between the home and the work place, do Bemba career women live dual lives or function with a dual consciousness – as a different person at work and someone else at home? The binary between public and private spheres (that was one space in pre-colonial era for the Bemba) imposed the suppression of Bemba women and their reduction to the private sphere. Women provide care for the family in terms of child care and household chores, and these continue to reproduce women's social life that is “economically dependent on their male partners” (Nicholson, 1986 and Tamale, 2005). Feminists around the globe have been looking at how women in work places experience life. *Amafunde yambusa* does not only form symbolic representations for charting Bemba femininity, but it has also come to symbolize Bemba women's identity in their places of work intentionally or unintentionally. It is therefore important to analyse Bemba women's experiences at their places of work as well as their learnings and understandings attached to their experiences in their various places of work (Tamale, 2005 and Reinharz, 1992).

African feminist cultural hermeneutics suggests looking at women's experiences of culture in ways that are life-giving. Bemba women's navigation and negotiation of *imbusa* teachings in their workplace is a way in which Bemba women use their agency.

The next section critically analyses the interviews that were carried out in Chingola Zambia in October and November 2014, using African feminist cultural hermeneutics as a tool to engage with the produced data. Participants in this study explained that they were taught by women (*banacimbusa*) that are mostly homemakers or housewives¹⁴³ during their preparations for marriage. All the participants in this study had been to college/university before they got married; a few of them were job-hunting, while the rest were working at the time they got married. The participants' experiences are similar in certain instances and different in others, yet, they all expressed the desire that *imbusa* teachings be reviewed to fit the context of career women in contemporary Zambia. The first theme

¹⁴³ Housewife in this study refers to women that are not in wage labour outside the home.

is that of *banacimusa*, ignoring that the women they were teaching were career women or that these women had just graduated from college or university and would be working in a few years if not months' time. In the next section, I analyse the findings according to the produced data.

7.2. Data Analysis

One of the participants lamented that *banacimbusa* were seemingly not interested in her career as a woman. They taught her much about her supportive role in her husband's career and her own career was neglected during the teaching.

7.2.1. Career is not Important for a Married Woman: Breaking the Taboo

Most of the participants explained that during their teachings, *banacimbusa* never talked about them as career women despite the fact that most of them were working or had just finished their university/college studies at the time they underwent the teachings. One of the participants explained:

'As far as the banacimbusa were concerned, I would never work in my life, all I needed was to know how to take care of my home, husband and family. Despite the fact that I told them that I had just graduated from a secondary (high) schoolteachers' training college, they never touched on the subject of my career. I never asked them about it because I am just supposed to just listen and learn, but in my mind, I had many questions because I always wanted to work.' (June Sampa 2014).¹⁴⁴

This kind of teaching and learning that does not allow for dialogue or questioning seems to suggest that *banacimbusa* believe that they have all the knowledge regarding marriage and the young brides have no new things they can add to *banacimbusa*'s experiential views of marriage. Viewing this through decolonial feminist lenses, there is a need for the decolonisation of teaching methods of *imbusa* in order to allow for participation of the brides or students of *imbusa*. June Sampa and Mirriam Numba's response to *banacimbusa*'s neglect of a woman's career in their teachings echoes the

¹⁴⁴ June Sampa (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (10 November).

desire of most Bemba women to be taught and empowered on how to progress in their careers as women.

'The part about my career was ignored completely even though they knew I was working; I was told that work should not come before my marriage. It was put as though I was a housewife. From banacimbusa's teaching, the emphasis was that when my husband gets home from work he should find the house is clean, the food is cooked, the aroma of food is lingering in the air. It was assumed that I am staying home while he's going to work and career for me as a woman was never really talked about. And I was told that just because I get a salary doesn't mean I should be cheeky with my husband; just because I will be bringing in money doesn't mean I should talk to him anyhow. It was more of me supporting him in his career by making sure there's peace in the home; I don't nag him when he comes home from a long day at work. They taught me that I needed to prepare his lunch for work and make sure he's had proper breakfast before going to work, and his clothes were ironed.'

In the same way, Bernice Mulanda explained:

'I should be frank to say that they did not touch on the career topic per se. They knew that I was working and our arrangement was that the teaching would take place after I knocked off from work but they still didn't teach me anything concerning how to handle or hold my career and marriage in balance.'

Patricia Kabwe¹⁴⁵ expressed the same sentiments concerning *imbusa* and a career:

'Banacimbusa teaches a young bride how to be obedient to her husband and how to take care of family but not necessarily how as a woman she should be independent. They won't teach you how to survive as an independent woman; you are solely dependent on a man.'

Imbusa teaching space does not allow the initiate/student to ask *banacimbusa* (and the women teaching her) questions as that is perceived as arrogance. Students or initiates have to be passive and listen to the older women who have been in marriage for a long time; they “followed” the same teachings they would be passing on to her as well. *Banacimbusa* believe that they kept their marriages intact because they followed the instructions from *imbusa*. In a feminist, decolonial approach, critical engagement is central, as learners are not passive. The learners are the focus of their agency and *nacimbusa* is just a facilitator who has a duty to engage the learners in the *imbusa* teaching space. Since much of the *imbusa* teachings are in symbols, I can argue that since brides or initiates/students/learners are not allowed to inquire from *banacimbusa*, they are symbolically being taught to replicate this relationship in their homes with their spouse. After three years in marriage, June Sampa went into full time employment as a high school teacher and began to question further certain aspects of

¹⁴⁵ Patricia Kabwe interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office Chingola Mine (October)

the *imbusa* teachings; some of the aspects she was already questioning during the teaching, however she could not ask or even suggest her ideas to *banacimbusa*. This also tallies with my personal experience; during the time I underwent the teachings, I was often left with unasked and inevitably unanswered questions. For instance, I had explained to my marriage mentors (*banacimbusa*) that my fiancée (then) and I had planned that I would be going to university in a few years' time; I was expecting them to talk me through this during our teaching sessions but alas, the topic was completely untouched. June Sampa (2014) negotiated the *imbusa* teachings despite *banacimbusa* not referring to career when they had taught her; she went on and got into professional work because she already had a qualification even during the time she underwent *imbusa* teachings. Naphtali Nkole (2014)¹⁴⁶ also lamented:

I wouldn't say that I have not gotten everything from the teachings and applied them to my marriage. When it comes to a career, banacimbusa don't really come to encourage you to prosper in that regard. It's more like support your husband in his career; and you are the one that loses for sitting and listening to them talk about you supporting your hubby and you are told nothing about progressing in your own career I think.'

The participants in this study expressed concern that *banacimbusa* do not care whether a woman that is being taught has a career or not; they do not touch on issues of career, hence women as agents of their own careers begin to negotiate and navigate their workplace in ways that they can. This is similar to what Frahm-arp (2014: 5) observed among Pentecostal women; she explains that “despite their churches’ teaching that women should remain at home while caring for young children, structural constraints in the lives of members often meant they made decisions about work and family which were contrary to their churches’ teaching”. Bemba women have been navigating the teachings in order to emancipate themselves. With the realisation that they want to remain married and working, Bemba women have been navigating the *imbusa* teachings in order to experience the workplace differently. Mushibwe (2009: 121) has succinctly argued that these teachings start from the time a child is born and “formal school may not have the capacity to alter such a mind-set”. In fact, the initiation school such as *imbusa* re-enforces the teachings further from where one’s parents/guardians left off. It can be argued that a Bemba woman goes into the work place after *amafunde yambusa* feeling as if they have been given preferential treatment to have a job. This is because according to the participants, *banacimbusa* emphasize that a woman needs to stay home and

¹⁴⁶ Natasha Nkole (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda IN Chingola Zambia (November)

take care of her family, even though they (*banacimbusa*) teach the bride/s that a woman must not just stay idly at home. Two of the participants explained that *banacimbusa* still prefer a woman to have a garden instead of developing a professional career or wage-paying employment outside the home as it was taught in precolonial times. For instance, Nancy Chomba 2014¹⁴⁷ stated that she was told to have a vegetable garden in her yard so that she does not have to buy simple things such as vegetables. Mulenga Mukupa 2014¹⁴⁸ also explained that “*they always tell a woman that even if she is just at home and not working, she has to have a garden*”. Instead of this focus on the gardening, as taught during precolonial times when Bemba people were egalitarian, *banacimbusa* have a duty to transcend this gardening teaching to focus more on careers that Bemba women on the Copperbelt province are currently working in. In the contemporary Copperbelt province, Bemba women have been in wage employment outside the home and this is where *banacimbusa* are supposed to provide teaching – on how a career woman needs to live her life in her home and at work. In traditional African societies, teachings and indigenous knowledge was left in the hands of the elderly to give and teach the young. Among the Bemba, for example, old women taught *imbusa* and were custodians of the teaching. They also chose from among the young women they taught who could become a *nacimbusa*, and they mentored such a woman. Similarly, Elisabetta Villa and Pia Grassivaro Gallo (2006: 58)¹⁴⁹ expressed that:

Among the populations of Uganda, this was conveyed by considerable use of proverbs, sayings, maxims, riddles, epic poems, and fables. The expertise of an elder was not limited to telling, but rather shown in knowledge about how to apply such proverbs to different situations, offering suggestions rather than solutions, and leaving it up to the listener to find an answer.

This is also true of the Bemba people of Zambia, the elders in this case, *banacimbusa*, facilitated the teaching process and every invited woman shared¹⁵⁰ their experiences with the bride as a way of teaching. It is often assumed that when a wife is working and especially when she makes a higher salary than her husband does, she would become pompous and disrespectful of her husband. Some

¹⁴⁷ Nancy Chomba (2014) interviewed in her home in Chingola (October).

¹⁴⁸ Mulenga Mukupa (2014) interviewed in Chingola (October).

¹⁴⁹ See also Annette Drews (1995).

¹⁵⁰ They never explicitly expressed that this was their experience in the whole teaching but there were some teachings where they would openly state that they had encountered or experienced what they were teaching.

of the participants explained, as shown in the quotes above, that they were taught not to become rude to their spouses just because they were working and bringing an income.

In the initiation process, the brides were and are still told that it is important to take all that they are being taught and use the teachings devotedly. This does not give room for questions from the part of the student or initiate. *Imbusa* teachings were constructed to be a means of Bemba women's agency as well as a way to face their marriages with wisdom. Nevertheless, in a society that is exposed to so much information, to reduce a teaching to a monologue is disempowering for women, especially because historically women in general have been told what to do, how to behave, and so on by others. I am aware, as Wane (2011: 9) argues, that "Struggling against oppression was not a singularly, individualistic task; rather, these women utilized their collective framework for support. In their struggle to overcome different oppressions, African women were the original feminists who sought to emancipate themselves from the bonds of servitude, inequality, and racial discrimination". Like Wane's argument above, Bemba women collectively took steps to teach young brides how as women they can experience life-giving marriages. Therefore, most Bemba women, like many other Zambian and African women who have been exposed to the women's struggle for gender justice, while they submit to such a teaching, have also devised ways of navigating culture and customs that are life-denying for them in everyday life. Marilyn Friedman (2003: vii) has argued, "Many social groups were prevented from living autonomously by systematic injustice, subordination, and oppression, conditions that have scarcely disappeared. The lingering force of these practices has prompted many feminists to view autonomy with suspicion." This is what most Bemba women face in their everyday lives, even in the space where they are in solidarity with other women who are supposedly their mentors. Esther Musama¹⁵¹ (2014) another participant in a similar vein also explained:

I think that the teaching and encouragement on career in imbusa is one element that is usually lacking in there, maybe because they think that if you get to look at life from that angle, the submission part and respect for your husband would be affected. But not to blame them because there are certain times as a career woman, you leave the office as the boss, when you get home you really want to make sure your friend (husband) knows that you are the boss.'

¹⁵¹ Esther Musama (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola.

In the same line, Pengo¹⁵² explained:

Banacimbusa never touched on the issue of my career as a woman; they kept telling me to support my husband in his work by making sure I prepared him food to take to work, for example, also make sure his clothes were ready for him to find in the morning and make the home favourable for him to rest after he comes back from work.'

Similarly, Betty Nonde also stated that *banacimbusa* never talked about her career during *amafunde yambusa*:

'Uumm they never talked about my career, in fact that time it was uncalled for. For me as a woman to be working, banacimbusa and even the in-laws would be questioning a woman's involvement in her home and family if she spends much of her time at work.'

Certain careers such as nursing were often perceived as inappropriate careers for a woman who wanted to be married. Nurses were seen as promiscuous and having extramarital affairs with the (male) doctors. This perception was worse for journalists, because female journalists were viewed as arrogant and would not make an "ideal wife". A suitable academic qualification for a woman who had a desire to marry was to be a teacher. Men were discouraged from marrying nurses, journalists etc., because they got higher salaries than men did and they were perceived as "uncontrollable" in postcolonial Zambia. This is probably why *banacimbusa* would make it hard for such women during *imbusa* teachings; they would emphasise submission and show to the educated young woman that they (*banacimbusa*) had better knowledge of *imbusa* teachings. *Banacimbusa* have a duty to teach young brides on how to take care of their marriages and ensure that even if they are career women, the man is always above them, according to the quote from the participants whose responses suggest that women with careers are in need of "fixing". Tamale (2005: 12)¹⁵³ has noted concerning the *Ssenga* institution in Uganda that it "facilitates and reinforces patriarchal power, while at the same time subverting and parodying it". In *amafunde yambusa* similarly, while Bemba women do not question the teachings while in the space and process of being taught, in their minds they have many questions and they later begin to navigate around these teachings and interpret them accordingly. Women's responses to these *amafunde yambusa* and their experiences at the workplace have been

¹⁵² Pengo (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (November).

¹⁵³ See also Nnaemeka (2003).

diverse and have various agency forms “ranging from those that are in conformity with the prevailing order to those in opposition to it”, as Alidou (2005: 10) explains of Muslim women in Niger. Similarly, another participant explained that “*imbusa* has tended to focus on marriage and not a woman’s career; there is nothing like a woman taking a career, there is just teachings on caring for husbands, *akatamba cunpo*¹⁵⁴, children, family etc.” (Delfister Ngosa 2014). While *banacimbusa* instil these teachings into young brides, at the place of work, women are faced with the challenge of proving that they are able to get promotion. For some employers, being a woman and unmarried disqualifies female employees from certain responsibilities and promotions. A woman who is not married is seen as immature, unable to make concrete decisions and therefore, cannot be promoted.

7.2.2. “A Woman, and Not Married”: A Struggle for Work Identity

Bemba women’s social status and identity is associated with marriage and *amafunde yambusa*. This therefore shows that when a woman has been taught, she is perceived to be a respectable and responsible member of the community even at the place of work. For instance, one of the participants lamented that:

‘I personally felt that I was doing well in a certain position at my previous job, and I was the highest sales person in my department where there were men countrywide. When a supervisor position was advertised, I knew I would get it because I was qualified but alas, it was given to a male colleague. I went to my boss to find out the reasons why I wasn’t given that position, and he told me that “it is because you are a woman and you are not even married”, that was before I got married. Some employers look at that because they don’t look at a single woman to be a serious, a mature person and a person who would make decisions. So, I think that really put me off and I wasn’t sure if I was going to sell in that company I didn’t see myself moving up, so I think that’s what even made me start job hunting.’ (Mulenga Mukupa 2014).¹⁵⁵

In Bemba cosmology, a lazy woman was considered as uncultured and was segregated by the community (Kapwepwe 1994). Kapwepwe (1994: 48) enlightens that women are taught not to be friends with lazy women; in his own words “*umukashana tafwile ukukonkelesha banamayo abakwakanwa*”. To be industrious and hardworking was a requirement for women and was advanced in *imbusa* teaching. This gave the woman status because it was seen as a virtue, which demonstrated maturity

¹⁵⁴ Food that is romantically prepared for one’s husband and cannot be given to anyone, this is the same food that most women use/d to keep their husbands under control by mixing it with some herbal concoctions (*muti*).

¹⁵⁵ Mulenga Mukupa (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (November).

and wisdom to handle marriage and social challenges. There is a belief among some Zambian people that a married woman is mature and has wisdom to handle promotion and challenges at workplace because of the traditional teaching they have acquired from *imbusa*. As Ault (1983: 182) argues, during the colonial period, marriages were regulated by the colonial masters and later involved traditional rulers of the Bemba people because industrialization had led Bemba women to “neglect” their marriages and family. It could be this similar mind-set that *banacimbusa* function when they teach young brides, fearing that if they emphasize career, women will pay less attention to their marriage and more to their career than their homes. While Mulenga Mukupa (2014)¹⁵⁶ decided not to appeal or fight the injustice that was targeted at her being a single woman, other women have fought gender injustice in the workplace. For instance, one participant argues that when she was sidelined for the promotion that was rightly hers, she “*fought it out*” (Bernice Mulanda 2014). Looking critically at the lament of Mulenga Mukupa’s (2014) experience at work, one notes that her qualification was not even considered in the promotion; instead the focus was on her gender and marital status. This raises questions whether the man who got the promotion was married himself. Would a man have received the same discrimination had he not been married? The response from Mulenga Mukupa’s (2014) boss suggests that besides qualifications, a woman needs to have a man (husband) in order to be promoted at work. The subliminal message Mulenga Mukupa’s (2014) boss was conveying was that a woman without a husband is unable to handle promotion, pressure and decision-making. Similarly, another participant lamented that there was a position for promotion and she was rejected:

I was undermined because I am a woman but I fought it out because I knew I deserved what I had achieved. We had a restructuring in 1991; we were just the two of us, a man and myself. A man had no qualification to stand at a branch, I had a qualification but because he was a man he was picked to say he should run a branch. I was given a retrenchment letter. I came home, I could not believe it. I appealed and put all my valid reasons stating I had the qualifications for the position than the man who has remained at the branch. I asked for explanations why I had been taken out. My appeal went through after a number of applications and now I am ready to retire.’ (Bernice Mulanda 2014).

While women are in employment, they face challenges that are not based on their qualification for the positions they hold; rather the challenge is their gender. The content of *amafunde yambusa* come into play in such an experience; a woman is supposed to respect a man, and respect is usually saying yes to everything a man says. A woman is taught that all men are to be respected in the community;

¹⁵⁶ Mulenga Mukupa (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (November).

even younger brothers are to be respected in the same way she respects her husband. In some cultures, all the male relatives of the husband would call their brother, nephew or cousin's wife as 'our wife'. Despite the expectations of some of their male colleagues at work, Bemba women's resilience is noted, for instance in the comment above. As a married woman who has been taught through *imbusa*, Bernice Mulanda pursued what she believed was hers and appealed the decision to retrench her unfairly. Is feminist influence at play in the place of work? On the other hand, is it like Nnaemeka (2003) argues; African women know when to go around patriarchal landmines? Musongole (2010: 46)¹⁵⁷ notes that contemporary Zambian women are taught to be good wives and mothers as well as responsible over their families more than anything else that were taught in the traditional *imbusa*. Bernice Mulanda (2014) had described the situation as was - unfair and unjust. She fought for justice until prevailed. She reveals that in the end was reinstated and given promotion. For Bernice Mulanda, (2014) there was no going around the "patriarchal landmines" – she confronted the injustice head on and sought to be liberated at the workplace. Rasing (2010: 1) stresses:

No matter where they grow up, or who raises them, they are brought up with certain customs and traditions; this also applies to men as they tend to perceive women in a particular way, which also extends to the work place. This is firstly, because the ones who raise them, whether parents or guardians, are brought up themselves with traditions and customs, so almost automatically, they bring up their sons and daughters in the same way, but also they want their children to be brought up that way.

For instance, one of the participants in this study expressed a desire to see her daughter go through what she went through in order to receive these teachings. Therefore, when undergoing *amafunde yambusa*, some customs that parents and guardians gave to their children are re-enforced by *banacimbusa*. As Anja Rudnick (2009: 19) argues (and Vochocova, 2008 gives similar sentiments), "Gender relationships are renegotiated and recreated by people in their everyday interactions and are variably influenced by both local and global processes." For some Bemba women, despite undergoing *amafunde yambusa* that teaches them to be submissive to the man and does not encourage women to advance in their careers, they find ways of negotiating and navigating the teachings especially in their workplace social spheres. One of the participants argued:

¹⁵⁷ See also Mushibwe (2009).

'You know, those are two different institutions (marriage and work). There has to be that balance where if I leave the office, my position, my everything remains at the office, but maybe that's why these guys (banacimbusa) are scared to teach on career because women would become less submissive to their husbands. But this time women are slowly being empowered and maybe that aspect needs to be included in the teachings; how does a woman get to handle some of these things?' (Esther Musama 2014).

It is important to note, as Rudnick ¹⁵⁸(2009: 20) has observed, "Gender thus is multifaceted and works individual and communal identity through social structures that determine the availability of and access to resources". *Imbusa* teachings in the contemporary postcolonial Copperbelt province are enshrined in the colonial mind-set; the belief is that if women are given resources and are empowered, they would neglect their responsibility for the family and become wild. The participants in this study have referred to this kind of thinking; that if during *imbusa* teachings women are encouraged to soar in their careers they will become "big headed", as Jelita Lwanga ¹⁵⁹ explained:

'I was taught not to become big headed; for example if I make more money than my husband, I should not become big headed just because of that. I still need to remember that I have a husband and need to submit while I am also enterprising. Even in the community I shouldn't be so big headed so that everyone knows that I am the one who's working in my home or earning more than my hubby; those things were stated clearly for me.'

Similarly, Chondoka (2001) claims that the significant customs that differentiate Bemba people from other African as well as Zambian groups is gradually being eroded by modernisation. However, the paradox is that Bemba people have still managed to preserve what they believe to be the life-giving customs even in the midst of and benefiting from modernisation (Chondoka 2001). It is clear that some communities view an empowered woman as a threat, which is why even in the workplace a woman would not be given promotion especially when she is not married. Many participants recalled that there was a period in the Copperbelt and Lusaka when some men were advised against marrying educated women because such women were perceived as culturally alienated and estranged from traditional morality. This meant that they could not make good or ideal wives because western influence and education had made them "immoral". Career women such as nurses and journalists were perceived as "not marriageable" because they could be easily lured into extramarital affairs with doctors in the workplace and other male colleagues. Therefore, many young men were advised to

¹⁵⁸See also Wane (2011: 10)

¹⁵⁹ Jelita Lwanga (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office Chingola mine (October).

marry village or illiterate women who were considered as cultured and more submissive than the educated women. Thus, career/work was socially and culturally alienating for many young women in Zambia because of the fear of being regarded as indecent. In short, work or career and marriage were seen as incompatible. Many participants lamented that education which gives women an opportunity for a career and economic autonomy became sidetracked by “tainted” traditional practices such as *imbusa*. This is a similar sentiment that Mushibwe (2009) observed during her research among Tumbuka people of Zambia who also practice a similar initiation rite for women to *imbusa*.

My argument is that these are colonial ideologies because in precolonial Bemba land, *imbusa* teachings were fundamental for cultural transformation, social progress and for the construction of Bemba womanhood. This is similar to Tamale’s (2005: 17)¹⁶⁰ observation among the Baganda of Uganda. Tamale (2005: 17) notes, “This tutelage also included some empowering messages. For instance, a *Ssenga* would encourage her nieces to engage in some home industry or economic ventures (such as weaving or pottery) in order to avoid total dependence on her husband”. In chapter five, I have explained how the process that led to the formation of the Copperbelt province of Zambia undermined women’s agency by imposing restriction on them concerning work and sexuality, among many other things. Patricia Hill Collins (2000: 46) describes black women’s experiences and stresses that “analyses of paid and unpaid work performed both in the labor market and in families stimulate a better appreciation of the powerful and complex interplay that shapes Black women’s position; they also promise to shed light on ongoing debates concerning connections between work and family”. Bemba women are taught in *imbusa* to be levelheaded in their homes regardless of whether they earn more than their spouse does. This suggests that for *banacimbusa*, a married woman does not necessarily need a career. The connection between family and work is almost completely ignored for Bemba career women by *banacimbusa*. Some men and women believe that a married woman ought to stay home and take care of her husband and family, and others believe that women ought to be in paid work so that they can also contribute to the wellbeing of their family. Most of the women interviewed explained that they were either the only or one of the few women in their work department and in this regard, they faced some challenges with male colleagues in their

¹⁶⁰ See also Villa Elisabetta and Grassivaro Gallo Pia (2006) and Drews (1995).

workplace. With this state, the women often had to prove that they were equipped to deal with their job and they were equal to the task.

7.2.3. “Prove that You are Equal to the Task”: Who is in Charge?

Apart from the two participants from the health department (nurses), most of the participants stressed that they were either the only female or one of a few women in the department and sometimes it proved to be difficult. For instance, Jelita Lwanga explains her experiences:

In my department, I am the only lady; when a male colleague in the same position as I gives job instructions to the others who are of course men, they would straight away get to work. But I am taken more casually when I give them job instructions; others would follow but for some it is a dragging process because they feel that it's a woman who is telling us to do this. In the beginning I would go to my boss and report them, but then I have tried to dialogue with them and we have ended up on a better level. Some men enjoy having a woman as a senior personnel or boss and they even work better, and with such a team, you work better as there is no dragging.' (Jelita Lwanga 2014).¹⁶¹

Josephine Mwansa (2014) also lamented:

I have been undermined as a woman at work but I had to stand my ground. I remember each time I passed through the gates at work, the guard would salute and say good morning sir because the perception is that the manager should be a man. So it put me in an awkward position but I had to stand my ground and try to remind them that am madam and not sir. And there are times when you are in the meeting, a man talks and they all agree; when you say something then they say “no not that” and yet the point you have is more valid than what they have. So the point I learnt from there is that you must stand your ground and speak out because most of the women would be intimidated and become quiet. Don't keep quiet; if you have a valid point that would be helpful for production, bring it out don't sit on it.'

As senior personnel in an organization or company, women are not taken seriously and have to work twice as hard as their male colleagues in the same position do. They often have to prove that they are able to deliver what they were employed to do in the company. This confirms what feminist scholars have already observed in empirical research among women in positions of power. Dele Braimoh, Rebecca Lekoko and Eunice Alade (2004: 79) explained, “The supporters of patriarchy, for example, accuse women who are conscious of the injustices of putting an end to family responsibility, leaving their children, and challenging intimate relationships with their spouses”.

¹⁶¹ Jelita Lwanga (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office at Chingola Mine (October).

“*Taking their stance*” or “*fighting it out*” are some of the ways that Bemba women were not taught in *imbusa*; rather, it is their negotiation as a method of resistance in a hostile work situation. The “*Prove that you are equal to the task*” slogan was the buzzword of the fieldwork from the participants because they all felt that they needed to work so much harder to prove to the male colleagues that they had what it takes to be in that position or to be promoted. This is similar to Alidou’s (2005: 14) discovery among Muslim women in Niger, who,

began to present multiple challenges to the masculinist stand by (re)defining their identities, sometimes in conformity with the status quo, sometimes against the expectations of the status quo, and at other times by crafting totally independent subversive identities in order to establish a sustainable material basis for themselves.

Bemba career women have often resorted to using the same instruments that were guaranteeing their subjugation for their wellbeing. In their place of work, Bemba women have not taken the challenges they face in the workplace lightly, rather they have fought unfairness targeted at them by appealing to structures of justice and other necessary means to show their male colleagues that they are qualified for the position they hold or that they are being denied. Another participant explained that she has experienced situations where as a woman she is not consulted by some male colleagues; they just go ahead and help her.

I am the only woman in the department, maybe if it's your ladies' day (menses) and you are feeling sick due to cramps. In addition, it shows when you are expecting you call in (at work) asking for permission from your boss to stay home. Moreover, yes you are considered as a weaker vessel so you find that sometimes the men in the department will do things without consulting, and you remain wondering that you are right there and they should have consulted with you first. When you tell them all this, they say 'its ok I will do this I volunteer' and all. I have learnt to just keep my stance and in a case where they think I can't do something, I just get up and do it even if I am not ok I make sure I keep up the hours and be the best I can. Every task given to me I make sure I work and do it very well. At least I gain their confidence, they know I can work, they know when am sick that I normally do my work; I am just not feeling too well.' (Nancy Chomba 2014).

Bemba women use experiences of both culture and work experience to navigate the work place; their own cultural experiences have contributed to the way they navigate the place of work as career women. Some of the experiences at work include sexism that may influence the way they exercise leadership in male dominated companies and organizations. The Bemba women’s approach to work is shaped by their socialization as Bemba and as women. Patricia Parker and td Ogilvie (1996: 190) argues concerning Black-American women, which can also be argued of Bemba career women, that “This is reflected in their behavioral complexity, which allows them to maintain self-efficacy in spite

of problems they may have”. Women across the globe have experienced one form of sexism or another in the place of work. Most often, as the participants explained, it is more about them being women than having qualifications and experience to hold positions in the place of work that disqualifies them from promotions in their workplaces. Hence, Bemba women find themselves negotiating their work place in order to stay in the position. Another participant similarly explained:

I have been undermined as a woman, I majored in computer programming and I remember when I did my course when we were doing our last project, I was in a group of five men and I was the only woman and I was in charge of the technical aspect so it meant encoding and everything. So one of the guys came to me and said Ester you think you'll be able to manage this field when you get married and have kids? I laughed and said yes I will, but then it became so evident when I started working, because when we opened the branch, it meant I had to set up the network infrastructure for the organization and all. By then we were in a bigger place and when they were told that they were waiting for someone from Lusaka to come and do the IT and all, probably they were expecting a man and so when I came on the scene to find it was a lady, I remember the branch manager looked at me and said 'are you sure you are going to fix these things so that we can start work full fledge tomorrow?'. You now start thinking to yourself like okay what is he thinking? It's like you are also made to feel so uncomfortable and if anything you end up panicking because now you have to make sure that everything works and it has to work right! And you know that there is somebody that is so sure that a woman can't do this and they are just waiting for that mistake, so that they can scream, so it was quite an uncomfortable position I must say. Information technology is a practical thing and you definitely just have to give yourself courage you just have to reach a point where you believe in yourself. Of course I felt bad but I looked at this man and I told myself "I've done this before, how can I fail just because of a man?" so I was actually more concerned at doing my very best so that I show him that women can still manage and that's what happened and so we reached a place where he would even call me for outside jobs. Again there are times when we give men the leeway where we want to give them that "I can't manage... can you help me with this I am a woman" kind of attitude but I think as women we just need to stand up and be equal to the task!" (Esther Musama 2014).

I have quoted Esther Musama at length because her story embeds the sexist experiences of the majority of African women in their work environment. Bemba women have become aware of the fact that their male colleagues at the workplace seem to be waiting for them to make a mistake so that they can take over their positions. That is why, as participants explained, they have to work twice as hard to keep those positions. Africa, and Bemba people in this case, had communities that were inclusive of both women and men, however, since the colonial era, Bemba and many other urban Zambian women's security became connected to an employed man. Bemba men may have been harbouring the desire to be in power and control women, and colonialism found ripe ground when the colonialists involved men in employment and left women to wait and be dependent on men. Men did not passively just receive from colonial officials; they also participated in this shift. Seeing another perspective of culture may have fuelled a desire they had or did not know already

existed in their lives. This suggests there is a combination of factors that led to Bemba men's elevation and their accepting an elevated position over women. Musa Dube (2013: 2) has explicitly argued, "the African continent was being penetrated by the West, its male subjugator, and inseminated with Western seed to give birth to the Westernized African." Rasing (2010: 5) has explained that Zambian women are in a state of uncertainty; "this situation of being 'in between', being raised in traditional society, but want to be modern, makes it difficult to know how one should behave". Men understand the influence and power that Bemba women hold, thus in the work place, they aim at not letting such power spring up. Some men have their hesitations on the topic of the display of womanly power; some have no opposition while others feel that women should stay at home. Women in general, not just Bemba women, are aware of this fact and hence, for the Bemba women, they work hard to show they are capable. Ester Musama (2014) explained:

'At first, I struggled because being a woman in the work place meant I made sure I performed my very best to always win you know the kudos of the men. To give the reason that women are equally equal to the task and so what that meant was most of the time was invested at work, it meant I spent most of the time on the internet surfing the latest technology making sure I update myself just making sure am on top of things am not taken by surprise.'

Bemba women's agency has not just been about fighting against the injustice and challenges that they face at work. They also work hard in order to equal their position in the company or organization. Feminists have focused on gender and work because these are important themes that correspond with social concerns of the inequality that women face in the place of work, as well as their home and society (Anne Oberhouser 2000: 62). Commenting on the question of sexism in the place of work, one participant explained:

Yes, there is sexism in the church; well dominance has never ceased to be there. Because even in the Bible when you look at the patriarchal kind of set up where a woman was looked down upon; but God began to break this norm this gender norm beginning from Old Testament up to the New Testament look at Deborah. God raised Deborah as a judge in the midst of that racial/gender discrimination of a woman. That dominance will remain there depending on who is there. Like for instance me, my husband who is the senior pastor of our church supports women in governance, he supports women in decision making because if he didn't, I don't think I would have had a seat here as director of church ministries that holds all departments of the church. I get into all departments to see what they are doing, I work with projections and how a department is doing and how best we can go and if a department isn't doing well, we sit and see how best we can go forward etc. Yes, not everybody is happy, others may not voice it but it may be in their heart. But you can sense it sometimes that others prefer a male in this position. It will take time for male dominance to die, that is why even in church structures even in organizations you find that it is ten men against two women on the board, that's dominance

already, there is no equality there, where you find that a church board has five men against one woman. Though they may not talk about it, the effect is there. But here it is not so much because the boss himself is my husband.’ (Delfister Ngosa 2014).

Looking at the diverse companies and organizations that these women work in, it shows that women¹⁶² generally, not just Bemba (who were participants because of their ethnicity), face many challenges because they are women. This participant argues that even when there is silence about gender inequality in the work place, it remains a controlling force and determines how women are perceived and treated by their male colleagues. As one participant, Mulenga Mukapa (2014) experienced it:

‘I’ve got two women now who are pregnant, one is on maternity leave, one is about two months pregnant and she can’t come to work, she is not okay, she’s always in and out of hospital. People are asking me to put them on probation which I can’t do because they are pregnant and I’d be infringing on their rights if I do that. The department is crippled as at now because of those two so all the men are saying that “this is why we don’t like women around.”’

It can also be noted that men prefer to take certain positions and even when they do not “voice it out”, it is still there. Fatou Camara (n.d.: 6) has argued that, “in matriarchal societies, woman is the seat of power, the provider of riches, the giver of life, the healer, the embodiment of justice”. This is also how Bemba society had been; women had power in the community to negotiate cultural tradition. Rasing (2001) also argued that Bemba women knew how to regulate the men. In an interview with Patricia Kabwe, she shared how as a woman she was denied a chance to move to a senior role because she had just given birth:

‘After I delivered in my previous company where I worked, my boss said I couldn’t move and assume a senior role because I had just delivered and that it is possible, being a woman I’d be required to spend more time and I’d be requiring time off work to attend to my family duties. I refused that and told my boss that it shouldn’t affect me because it’s not performance. You should be able to say am not able to move if am not performing well and not because I’ve had a child.’

Patricia Kabwe (2014) argued her case with her boss and eventually she was given the position. This shows that while there is sexism in the place of work, Bemba women are not just watching as

¹⁶² In Zambia, it is not only Bemba women that undergo *amafunde yambusa* or its equivalent before marriage; almost all ethnic groups have teachings to prepare women for marriage. On the Copperbelt especially because of ethnic diversity, ethnic customs have been blending and most teachings are termed in Bemba terminologies.

promotions at work pass them by; they know their stand and have also noted the changes in the society. In an interview, Betty Nonde (2014) explained:

‘Currently, we find female electricians, doctors, engineers etc. and in Malawi there was president who was a woman not long ago. Women can do it, we shouldn’t even undermine ourselves. What men have done even as women we can do it. Women get liberated with education; they get rid of dependency syndrome because when problems come you are able to fight them on your own because you are already empowered. It was not happening in the past; it was ... uncalled for. In 1997 I remember I was at Nkurumah teachers training college and I became pregnant, the school asked me to withdraw and to stop school. I had to withdraw and I was given forced leave, I had to leave until I had given birth, in the process a gender desk came into existence, now that’s the story of the past. Even a pregnant woman has a chance to be in school unlike in the past.’

According to this argument, empowerment for women starts with education, as many feminist around the globe have demonstrated.¹⁶³ Mushibwe (2009) (see also Rehema Magesa et al, 2014) has dealt with the subject of modern education vis-à-vis traditional education of women in Zambia among the Tumbuka people. Betty Nonde (2014) has similarly argued above, a girl child was prepared for marriage from her home, even in the school; and if she manages to get to university, she is always reminded that she is supposed to be taking care of the family. It is important to restate that *Amafunde yambusa* has remained resilient despite the changes in culture and technology and as such, Bemba women may forever remain as shadows of their male counterpart if the teaching remains without focus on work. In fact, participants in this study referred to the fact that while times have changed, much in the *imbusa* teachings has remained the same as it was reconfigured during the colonial period. While women are moving up in careers and education, they are given a teaching that has remained static and does not even reflect traditional Bemba wisdom and philosophy but a colonial mind-set. Nancy Chomba explained, “because of modernisation I think *banacimbusa* should consider revising the syllabus that they use when teaching”. Women and feminists, in contrast, see women in decision-making positions to be a starting point in women’s empowerment. Just as Alidou (2005: 17) has argued concerning the *madarasa* in Nigeria, *imbusa* is a space of women’s solidarity and teachings concerning marriage and women in society. For the Nigerian women, as Alidou (2005: 17) explains, the space goes a step further; “*madarasa* has become a space that Nigerian women in urban centers are appropriating not only to advance their understanding of Islam for religious purposes, but more importantly to create a new female space for generating economic revenue and female solidarity”.

¹⁶³ Mushibwe (2009); Magesa (2009); Maryan Zuniga (1995); Nelly Stromquist (1995).

7.3. Conclusion

This chapter has critically engaged with the collected data and demonstrated that Bemba women are expected to behave a certain way at work. In fact, it has been established that their marital status is taken into consideration when it comes to promotion; most often, their qualifications are not even taken seriously. I have argued that *Imbusa* remains that Bemba space for women, within which a new Bemba woman can be constructed – one who can adequately function in contemporary society by maintaining an intricate balance between tradition and modernity within workplace social spheres and home. Some participants expressed concern over *banacimbusa*'s lack of interest in women's careers. For instance, Esther Musama (2016)¹⁶⁴ explained that “*look at when these teachings were started and now; definitely we can't run away from the fact that things have changed.*”

In the following chapter, I deal with the implications of these observations and how *imbusa* can become a viable space for envisioning an alternative Bemba married career woman in contemporary Zambia

¹⁶⁴ Esther Musama (2014), Interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

CHAPTER EIGHT

NAVIGATING *IMBUSA* IN PRIVATE SPHERES: BEMBA WOMEN, HOME AND AGENCY

When you go to work as a career woman you put on a “career woman’s coat”. When you come back home, you take it off and put on a “coat of a wife”; you are not a career woman in your home. You are a mother; you are a wife now, that’s the whole thing. When you come in, leave your career woman’s coat outside. You can bring your work at home and do a bit of it but immediately you reach home, you put on the coat of a wife. You focus on your husband despite being so tired. – Delfister Ngosa (2014)¹⁶⁵

8.0. Introduction

The statement above from Delfister Ngosa (2014),¹⁶⁶ one of the participants, discloses much about how *imbusa* prepares women for home management in the private sphere moreso than wage paying work and careers in the public spheres. In fact, most of the participants shared these similar sentiments during interviews, as shall be demonstrated from the emerging themes below. The previous chapter centred on Bemba career women’s agency in public/social spheres and some of the experiences that Bemba women have encountered in their place of work.

After undergoing *amafunde yambusa*, Bemba women go to their homes as married women to live out and experience what they were taught in this *imbusa* space. Stemming from the first research question: ‘What are the *imbusa* teachings regarding Bemba career women?’, this chapter seeks to ask further: ‘Are Bemba women completely faithful to these teachings, or do they critically engage with the teachings and take only what they believe is beneficial to them?’ This chapter seeks to critically show how Bemba career women navigate and engage with *amafunde yambusa* in their homes while the previous chapter demonstrated how Bemba women navigate the *imbusa* teachings in the public sphere or workplace. The interviews demonstrated how “...a woman is always an active subject, making meaning of who she is and what is expected of her, while accommodating societal demands and repudiating others in order to achieve her goals in life” as Elinami Veraeli Swai (2010: 5)

¹⁶⁵ Delfister Ngosa (2014) Interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

¹⁶⁶ Delfister Ngosa (2014) Interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

explains generally of African women. The aim of this chapter is to show whether and how Bemba career women navigate *amafunde yambusa* in their homes, the domestic or private spheres.

8.1. Imbusa and Private or Domestic Spheres

Due to the responsibility that women are expected to hold in community after marriage, Bemba women have to undergo these teachings in order to be equipped and ready to take up their positions. Social norms remain binding particularly when women's agency increases and is thought to directly change power dynamics in the household and in society. In an interview, one of the participants, Betty Nonde (2014) explained:

Women that are more educated than their husbands stop giving and showing respect, these women think that empowerment and submission do not go together and that's why we are witnessing so many divorces today because educated women think our values are stupid. Then you find some humble and well cultured [single] women who may not even be educated but they know how to treat a man better than his wife does. That's why it is easy for a man to leave a good and beautiful home and goes to sleep in a komboni (equivalent of squatter camp in South Africa) where while he is sleeping inside the hut/ house; his legs are outside because the house is too small. All this is happening because women who have PhDs stop showing respect for their husbands.'

This comment from Betty Nonde shows that even as educated, career women, culture still demands that a woman be confined to the private sphere where she takes care of the family and especially her husband in order to keep her marriage. There is nothing wrong with a woman taking care of her family; however, when her career is used as a threat to men and as a reason for her spouse to leave her for another woman, and she is given the "be a good wife card" as explained by Betty Mulanda (2014),¹⁶⁷ then her career is threatened. Because it can be argued that some men are insecure, they cannot let their wives take up careers no matter what qualifications their wives may have. In fact, even some educated career women feel they are to abide by these rules from their spouses and society, especially *imbusa* teachings. A question arises; why is the private sphere associated more with women than men? While the private sphere is often seen as women's space and the public as men's, there is an interconnectedness between the two spheres. While men are associated with the public sphere, they share their lives in the private spheres with women in one way or another and so do

¹⁶⁷ Bernice Mulanda (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

women just as much as they share in the public sphere. In addition, it must be noted that within the private sphere, Bemba career women as individuals or a collective, apply agency in a variety of activities and initiatives that may be small or large in their everyday lives. Inequality, as Danaya Wright (2012: 61) explains, “is a product of the public/private distinction and that inequality generally falls along lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality”. Wright (2012: 45) explains how the public and private spheres are separated:

The defining aspect of separate spheres is that women act in and are influenced by the values of a domestic space focused on the needs of family, while men act in a public space focused on the needs of civil society...The metaphor of the sphere suggested that women’s actions were bounded, encircled, limited to an area, both physical and intellectual, while men’s spheres were global and universal.

This is why women have been pushed to the private sphere of home and family care more than the public space that is a sphere of decision-making, policy formulations and income generation. In precolonial times, Bemba women participated in decision-making in the public sphere (Poewe 1981, and Hinfelaar, 1994). For example, they performed marriage negotiations together with the Bemba men. The women (especially the paternal aunt and maternal grandmother) were involved in lobola negotiations; this was not left for the men alone.

I refer to the home as the private sphere, borrowing the idea from Wright (2012: 57) who established that the private sphere is prescribed to women, and it is the domestic space where women take care of their family and husbands. Richards (1982) and Corbeil (1982) have interpreted *imbusa* to mean sacred emblems; I will take that interpretation a bit further. The etymology of *imbusa* is rooted in the word *imbaso*, a very sharp, specialized tool that is an axe-like tool for chiselling artefacts for finer carving of whatever art is being worked on. This means that *imbusa* is a craft tool for carving a girl into a woman. When a woman goes through *imbusa* teachings, she is being carved at the hands of *banacimbusa* to become what society expects of her as a married woman. The process of a young Bemba bride being chiselled with instructions by *banacimbusa* who are themselves chiselled by the same teachings, transforms her into a woman. The picture below shows a man using *imbaso* to carve the work of art. Bemba people make artistic things such as wooden cooking sticks, pestle and mortar, etc, among many other forms of art using *imbaso*. A cooking stick, pestle and mortar are also used in *imbusa* and they use *imbaso* to shape and carve these beautiful art instruments.

This is also to explain that *imbusa* is like *imbaso* in that it “fine tunes” a Bemba bride to come out as a work of fine art that has been carved and moulded in the ways of the Bemba. The picture below shows a man carving something out a piece of wood. The axe-like instrument he has in the hand is *imbaso*.



Figure 2. Picture of a man using *imbaso* by Terri Reiser (7th May 2014) taken from thewonderinzambia.wordpress.com

8.2. Theorizing the Home: African Indigenous Feminism

The private and public spheres are very much gendered spaces, the home being a private space that has for centuries been associated with women while the public social sphere is associated with men, who take up wage labor outside the home (Tamale 2005: 11).¹⁶⁸ This has not been the case with the Bemba people because women and men have occupied both spaces, with women also taking up

¹⁶⁸ See also Linda Kerber (1988); Kim Warren (2006).

chieftainship positions. The private/public binary has contributed to women being left with domestic lives while men are in the public sphere. For Bemba people, the home is the domain of a woman and she has to be taught how to take care of it in order to know how to hold her marriage in place. The woman is made responsible for whatever events happen in the home, even when she has no control over them. For example, if the husband is having an extramarital affair, she is blamed for not being a good wife or not being able to sexually satisfy her husband. Tamale (2005: 11) argues that the private/public sphere separation contributes to women's domestication as "women provide the necessities of productive and reproductive social life *gratuitously*".

Phiri and Nadar (2006) explain that culture can be navigated by upholding what is life giving while rejecting what is oppressive and life-denying. In their relationship with the public and negotiate their positions, combining various degrees of autonomy and reciprocity". Soothill (2007: 74) further asserts that the colonial era saw women excluded from taking up education that would help them be employable outside of the home "... an increasingly exclusive identification of women with the domestic sphere—an ideology that was propagated by missionary Christianity but reinforced in many cases by indigenous traditions of female domesticity" was established. *Banacimbusa* are often women who have not been to universities and since *imbusa* teachings are taught from experience, they often insist that a woman has to take care of her home more than they emphasise a woman's career. Tamale's (2005: 10) argument that men dominate women by controlling the public sphere is true here as well because men not only control the public but the private sphere as well. While women are associated with the private spheres, traditional teachings like *imbusa* still prepare women to be "*at the beck and call of a man*" as Pengo Ng'andu (2014),¹⁶⁹ one of the participants in this research, explained. Some women are able to negotiate these teachings, however the question remains, what about those that are unable to navigate such teachings? Indigenous knowledge has been very helpful in African communities; Wane (2011: 8) has argued that, "Indigenous knowledge is a living, constant experience that is informed by the ancestral voices, past, present and those to come". Nevertheless, indigenous knowledge functions as a double-edged sword for most career Bemba married women. On the one hand, it promotes identity and status in society and on the other hand, it makes them vulnerable to domestic abuse. Yet it can be argued that while contemporary

¹⁶⁹ Pengo Ng'andu (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

Bemba women are often associated with the private sphere, they also are finding ways of making the most out of their situation. For instance, in *imbusa*, Bemba women were taught to at least make vegetable and fruit gardens in their back or front yards so that they did not depend entirely on their husbands. Participants like Patricia Kabwe (2014)¹⁷⁰ state that “*They teach you gardens and that but not how to survive as an independent woman.*” Mulenga Mukupa (2014)¹⁷¹ also explains that *banacimbusa* “*always tell a woman that even if she is just at home (not working outside the home) she has to have a garden*”. This, I argue in chapter seven is what *banacimbusa* have failed to translate into contemporary life in Zambia, of women pursuing careers, as one of the participants also argued above. While this garden making was a way of economic empowerment for women during the precolonial and colonial eras, for current times, it needs redefining. While Zambian women still make vegetable gardens in their yards, it is not enough to support their families. It is necessary for *banacimbusa* to focus the *imbusa* teaching on careers in order to assist the young career women in how to balance their homes and workplaces. African indigenous ways of life are based on community involvement in the life of its members. Within this way of life are approaches for the benefit of the community as noted by Wane (2011). This means that the teachings Bemba women receive as they enter into marriage are negotiated at some point in the lives of Bemba women. In fact, within some of the teachings received in *imbusa* lie the survival strategies for Bemba women. While there are many women’s groups in Zambia advocating for the rights of Zambian women, I would contend that there is the possibility that some uneducated ‘stay-at-home’ women as well as some educated women are not aware of what these groups are really about or even what kind of help they can get from such women groups. In addition, some of the educated and career women would not want to associate with such groups especially as feminism has had a negative response from Zambian people due to the ways it was introduced in the country. In postcolonial Zambia, there is a need for an *imbusa* teaching that is life-giving for Bemba women and men. Patricia Hill Collins (2000: 47) argues, “Assuming a relatively fixed sexual division of labor, wherein women’s roles are defined as primarily in the home with men’s in the public world of work, the traditional family ideal also assumes the separation of work and family”. Below, I analyze Bemba women’s lived experiences and the negotiation of *amafunde yambusa* in the private sphere. Wane (2011: 7) affirms, “African people must reposition their cultural resource knowledge in order to appreciate the power of collective responsibility to tackle social

¹⁷⁰ Patricia Kabwe (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

¹⁷¹ Mulenga Mukuppa (2014), Interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

issues”. A collective of older married women who have undergone *imbusa* and have experienced the teaching in marriage teaches a bride. They pass on the wisdom and how *imbusa* teachings have helped them in their marriages. Like Wane (2011: 9), I employ African indigenous knowledge,

to challenge the institutional powers and imperialistic structures that have prevented many African women from realizing the importance of dismantling the colonial patriarchal structures left behind by colonizers after the attainment of political independence, and also, to articulate the historical depth of African feminism as a way of knowing rooted in historical Indigenous knowledges of African peoples.

For instance, Haynes (2013: 1) explains that Bemba women are currently employing more “straight talk” and “openness” in the *imbusa* teachings than they previously did when Richards and Rasing wrote. This same “straight talk and openness” is what the some missionaries may have referred to as pagan and obscene, because, in the *imbusa* space, *banacimbusa* and other women talk about sex and procreation openly and explicitly. Heike Becker (2004: 45), writing on *Efundula* Owambo women’s initiation rites in Namibia, argues that:

The Christian missions, on the other hand, objected to the initiation of young women as ‘savage’ and indecent. To them the ‘nakedness’ of the traditionally clad Owambo embodied the darkness, disorder and danger, in other words, the ‘savagery’ of African sexuality and *culture*.

Since the way African (Bemba) women were dressed in their space of teaching was already judged, the words that were spoken by these same women were judged; women sealed their fate with the colonial officials and missionaries. Rasing (2004: 288) argues that currently, Catholic priests in Zambia for example have “taken the initiative to stimulate dialogue with women on initiation rites as a way of changing the rites. Today priests recognize that *banacimbusa* are important and seek their collaboration to gain more information about the topic”. This seems similar to the male missionaries who wanted to inspect *amafunde yambusa* in colonial times. Their intentions may be well intended; however, *imbusa* as a female space of solidarity would need women in that space in order to talk freely about the necessary changes to be made. If the *banacimbusa* are the ones who intentionally makes the call for the priests to come and dialogue, it makes a difference because *banacimbusa* are the ones who invite the groom into the *imbusa* space. Being the one who makes a house into a home, the Bemba woman is instructed as to how she has to run her home; as such, she is the knower of

tradition and she is the one who passes it on to the young and to her spouse. Having the privilege of going through the *imbusa* teachings, women are the knowers of that tradition and would best promote necessary changes. Using feminist cultural hermeneutics as a tool to analyse women's experiences of *imbusa* in the homes, the next section analyses Bemba women's experiences of the *imbusa* teachings. Participants explained that Bemba women have to be instructed in order to become what their communities expect of them.

8.3. Data Analysis of the Private Sphere

In the sections below, I analyse the produced data to demonstrate Bemba women's experiences of *imbusa* in their homes. The sections focus on the lived experiences of Bemba women in their homes after they have undergone *imbusa* teachings.

8.3.1. “Women have to be Taught to ‘Become’”

Like Owambo women's initiation, Bemba women's *imbusa* teaching is “first of all, a rite of social maturation” (Becker 2004: 40). Becker (2004: 40)¹⁷² explains further that the rite, “...publicly transformed the initiates... into adults, completing them with the essential attributes of their new status.” This means for Bemba women that going through the rite equipped them for marriage, a necessity for Bemba people. Richards (1982: 125), in her book *Chisungu: A Girl's Initiation Ceremony Among the Bemba of Zambia*, concludes that the Bemba women (*banacimbusa*) believe that *amafunde yambusa* magically transforms a Bemba girl into a woman. La Fontaine (1982: xxii) explains that Richards' interpretation of the women's belief that they were growing the girls is due to Richard's “interpretation of the cultural associations that lie behind their words”. Every teaching within *imbusa* has multiple explanations, and *banacimbusa* are convinced that once they have completed their *imbusa* course, the girls will have the knowledge that all other women have received. This knowledge gives these young brides status as women. My argument against Richards and La Fontaine is that they had a bias in their interpretation of the transformation. There is nothing supernatural about Bemba women's belief that *amafunde yambusa* transforms a girl into a woman; it is similar to the belief that

¹⁷² See also Richards (1982).

(academic) education liberates. A Bemba bride is taught and the teaching she receives transforms her into a woman who is able to carry out responsibilities in society as well as in marriage. In this same way, Delfister Ngosa (2014) and many other participants emphasized that women have to be taught to become good wives. Delfister Ngosa (2014) said:¹⁷³

'Traditional teachings that women receive are skills that needs to be upheld. A woman that has never gone through that path (marriage) needs to be prepared just like someone going to college; if someone wants to be a nurse or a doctor or what you [referring to me as a researcher] are doing, they have to be prepared. If a woman wants to become a nurse or whatever, she has to go to college to be taught to become; similarly, Bemba women have to be taught to become.'

This was pointed out by almost every participant – that a woman cannot go onto a path she has never walked before without direction by those who have already gone through it. In fact, similar to Delfister Ngosa's explanation above, Rasing (2004: 282) has explained that "The *banacimbusa* are the transformers in rites: they transform and make the novice aware of what it means to be transformed". *Amafunde yambusa* of young Bemba brides transforms them into what society expects of a married woman, hence "*women are taught to become*" as Delfister Ngosa (2014) explained. Marriage is an important aspect of life for the Bemba women and men. Delfister Ngosa (2014) emphasised that "*I think marriage is so sacred*" and "*its not a child's play*"; one needs to be mature and prepared enough for it in order to live in harmony with one's husband and family. This is a common adage among Zambians. This statement shows how for Bemba women, the space of *amafunde yambusa* is critical. It is a space of solidarity and community counselling as the married women stand together to support the young bride during marriage preparation. Wane (2011: 8)¹⁷⁴ explains that "...African feminism places value on a sense of communalism and cooperation. It is also based on survival strategies that women develop over time as frameworks for self-reliance, self-determination and empowerment". For Bemba women, this teaching space is where a woman is taught to become empowered in the ways that she ought to take care of her marriage. *Imbusa* teachings are essential for Bemba women whether it is in the city or rural areas, for educated or uneducated women, career or not. However, this aspect of women and career has been neglected over the years within the *imbusa* curriculum. To become a married woman, Bemba people believe that a woman needs to be taught in

¹⁷³ Delfister Ngosa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

¹⁷⁴ See also Nnaemeka (2003); Kaunda and Reddy (2013).

the same way that students in schools are prepared to become lawyers, doctors etc. In fact, Delfister Ngosa (2014) emphasized that:

'you cannot go into the path you've never been before without being taught, people who do that are those that are cohabiting, doing their own thing, teaching their own thing. I think marriage is so sacred and because of that, a woman has to be thoroughly taught! Marriage did not come from a garbage bin.'

This shows how important *amafunde yambusa* is to Bemba people. Another participant Mulenga Mukupa (2014)¹⁷⁵ explains in detail that *imbusa* teachings

'...prepare a woman for what she is going into in marriage; I am a very traditional person, so I think traditionally they (amafunde yambusa) are to prepare you as a young bride for what you are going into as you enter the institution of marriage. It's of course a new environment, a whole new place for a young woman and so when you are going there, you don't really know what you are going to find, you don't know what to expect so the young women are taught by the elderly women what to expect and how they are supposed to behave. Personally I feel it's something that prepares you for what you are going to find in marriage.'

The starting point according to these quotations is that a woman has to learn to become a good or an ideal wife. One of the participants in Thabethe's (2008: 29) research aptly explains, "...bring the child to the school for panel beating. When the child leaves the child would have reformed". This means that undergoing *amafunde yambusa* does not only empower women for marital longevity, the teachings also correct and transform women that were supposedly previously discourteous and unteachable, which is quite problematic as the man is left out of these teachings. Does it mean that a previously discourteous man can reform by himself without being taught? Similarly, Jelita Lwanga (2014)¹⁷⁶ one of the participants in this study explained that:

'Imbusa teaching is focused on what a woman should be; the dot com (.com) [or internet] teachings are different from imbusa teachings. I don't think that the things that I was taught are things that I will find in public, there is a difference and it's only right to go through certain lessons to equip yourself.'

How a Bemba Zambian married woman should behave in marriage is closely linked to the *imbusa* teaching, according to Jelita Lwanga and other participants above. Therefore, the preparation of a woman to become a good wife is also a result of Bemba women's desire to work hard and keep their

¹⁷⁵ Mulenga Mukupa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (November).

¹⁷⁶ Jelita Lwanga (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (November).

marriages intact, as noted by Rasing (2001:89). Peni Chomba (2014),¹⁷⁷ a participant in this study, also explains that *Imbusa* teachings were initially meant to equip a woman entering into marriage on various aspects of homemaking, from cleaning to cooking to taking care of the family members' needs. She further clarifies that a Bemba woman was taught:

'Respect for self and others just as humility and living a life of a role model to her family was important. The teachings would prepare the young lady for almost any circumstance and challenge she was to face in her new home. It would help her make well-informed decisions and also solve issues confidently. However, in my opinion, the tutors now concentrate on teaching the young lady how to dance in bed for the husband, how she cannot say she is tired once he asks for sex, even if he asks for sex after a fight, she is supposed to submit and give in.' (Peni Chomba 2014).¹⁷⁸

In Peni Chomba's (2014) view, the central focus for *amafunde yambusa* has become more about sex rather than what it was intended for previously – to cater for various aspects of a woman's life as a married woman. This is similar to Hinfelaar's (1994) point that the precolonial *imbusa* included teaching in politics, spirituality, priesthood, leadership and so on. Hinfelaar (1994: 56) explains that the missionaries' approach "unwittingly undermined the traditional status of women. Their main aim was to train young men as their [missionaries] assistants." Ifi Amadiume (2002b: 45) asserts that African women were able to generate a culture, a world in which women could resist any hostile discourse for the Bemba women, through *imbusa* teachings. In fact, Hinfelaar draws more on Richards and Hall's research of the Bemba. Hinfelaar (1994: 56) noted that when Richards returned to "Bembaland, she seemed to have had misgivings about her (earlier) conclusions". What struck Richards and Hall, according to Hinfelaar (1994: 57), "was the cultural-religious decline of the home-shrine [which was a domain of Bemba women. They [Richards and Hall] saw modern developments as giving the husbands the position of wage-earners and, according to the Bible, as heads of the household (Ephesians 5:22) while causing them to be absent from home most of the time."

John Mbiti (1969:122) argues that initiation rites had greater educational purpose. The occasion often marked "the beginning of acquiring knowledge which otherwise would not be accessible to

¹⁷⁷ Peni Chomba (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

¹⁷⁸ Peni Chomba (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

those who have not been initiated”. Betty Nonde (2014)¹⁷⁹ has argued that the rite emphasizes women’s care of others more than themselves. In fact, one other participant complained when she raised the question, “...*I am even bitter (about the teachings), you can even see my facial expression, they performed a sketch in my teachings and I was left thinking that ‘is it (marriage) all about sex?’*” Such approaches to the interpretation of *imbusa* have contributed to reducing the rite to a sexual instruction ritual. Bemba women have been asking questions that are leading to their negotiation of *amafunde* in their homes and work. In the same way, Paola Melchiori (2001: 11) argues that women have “...tested their strengths and weaknesses in the private and public spaces that define the organisation of our material and conceptual world”. This means that women know how much influence (be it silent) that they have and how much they can push the cultural boundaries for their own good (Nnaemeka 2003). When a young bride had gone through these teachings, she was considered able to run her home as she had been given tools to assist her in whatever she would encounter in marriage; in short the *imbusa* teachings had been handed down to her and it was up to her how she would use the teaching.¹⁸⁰ When the teaching was over, *banacimbusa* would sing a song that can be translated as “we have done our part, it is up to you to build or destroy your own marriage”. The bride at this point was/is also ready to teach another bride should she be called upon to be part of the teaching committee. Peni Chomba (2014) raises another important issue that concerns sexuality. Indeed, erotic instruction is central in *amafunde yambusa* and elsewhere I have argued that Bemba women have been taught to submit sexually to their husbands at all costs (Kaunda 2013); there is no reason for a culturally taught Bemba woman to deny her husband intimacy. For the participants, some of the teachings seemed to have been requiring them to take care of their spouses (such as washing his clothes, making sure the husband has nice home cooked meals as well as satisfying him sexually) and this is very serious in the teaching. The questioning of the *imbusa* teachings led some women to believe that they were taught to be at the “*beck and call*” of a spouse.

¹⁷⁹ Peni Chomba (2014), Interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

¹⁸⁰ This is similar to Bemba women’s teaching on keeping virginity; a girl is taught on the importance of her virginity and is given responsibility on how she guards it compared to the Zulu culture that inspects and tests girls for their virginity.

8.3.2. “They teach you to be at the beck and call of a man”: *Reality Check*

After receiving the teachings of *imbusa*, most of the participants expressed how they wanted to prove to their husbands that they had understood the teachings and they did everything to the minute detail in order to give that proof. For instance, Pengo Ng’andu explained:

‘When I just got married I thought that they [amafunde yambusa] were very helpful, it was like I was being ushered into something that I barely knew anything about. But then when I got into it [marriage], I got a bit disappointed, in that it’s like they teach you to be at the beck and call of a man but meanwhile in the real sense you are actually partners. It was a bit rough from 2001 to somewhere after 2005 because it’s like we couldn’t agree on how to run a house. I don’t know how I may put it, but it was more like for example the issue of not communicating verbally but by using beads; when you are having menses, hang a red bead somewhere so he can see it, why not simply tell him?’

Pengo Ng’andu (2014)¹⁸¹ engages a very interesting discussion on how Bemba women begin to negotiate *imbusa* teachings in their homes. Firstly, as young brides enter into marriage, there is an eagerness to prove a point to their spouse and family that they have understood what they had been taught. Then reality sets in and they begin to question... the same questions they had during the teaching but could not raise them then. If the *imbusa* space had a dialogical approach, some of these questions would be dealt with during the teaching and learning process. Given that *imbusa* is a space of solidarity for Bemba women, if it was dialogical, some of the questions that arise in marriage could be handled during the teaching because the young brides would have been given a chance to engage with the *banacimbusa*. It is as if the empowerment they received from *imbusa* teachings became disempowering for them as layers of the teachings began to be a struggle. The dilemma is that these teachings are empowering and paradoxically disempowering. For instance, Pengo Ng’andu (2014)¹⁸² lamented:

‘it was very difficult because I didn’t understand why they [banacimbusa] were teaching us to wake up early in the morning, prepare water for him (husband), serve him breakfast, but we are both going for work at the same time or even using the same transport.’

Similarly, June Samapa explained:

¹⁸¹ Pengo Nga’ndu (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

¹⁸² Pengo Ng’andu (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola, (November).

I wake up early since we both go to work in the morning, I prepare his and my clothes the night before, then prepare his bath, breakfast and pack his lunch in the morning. Sometimes you find that I have to do all this and he will be saying I am late when all he has to do is wake up and bath, meanwhile I had a lot of things to do before preparing myself for work. So it is natural that questions began to fill my head.'

Pengo Ng'andu (2014) and June Sampa began to question why they had to be doing all these things for their husbands when they can do all of those things on their own. In marriage, the women either explain their discomfort with some of the lessons they received to their spouse or they begin to negotiate the teachings privately. When the women are done proving a point to their spouses, they begin to see things differently and begin asking questions, which then lead them to negotiating. *Imbusa* teachings are as important among the Bemba people as marriage itself. Britta Thege (2009:457) explains of black South African women in the North West province that, "... marriage is identified as very important for a woman in terms of gaining social respect". *Imbusa* earns women societal respect just as marriage does. Wane (2011: 9) has argued that African feminism is,

'...also based on survival strategies that women develop over time as frameworks for self-reliance, self-determination and empowerment. When African women were oppressed through enslavement or colonialism, they were forced to develop techniques that ensured their survival. Struggling against oppression was not a singularly, individualistic task; rather, these women utilized their collective framework for support. In their struggle to overcome different oppressions, African women were the original feminists who sought to emancipate themselves from the bonds of servitude, inequality, and racial discrimination.'

It seems that since Bemba women teach as a collective, if the opportunity were granted for the initiates or students to ask questions during the teaching, they would collectively as women assist the young brides with answers or directions. *Amafunde yambusa* is a way Bemba women seek to empower each other on the secrets to a long lasting marriage and respect in society. It is however ironic that the *imbusa* space where women come together in solidarity to teach the young brides, enforces subservience to some extent, as some of the participants revealed. Turner (1987: 59) explains the experience of teaching a girl among the Ndembu women:

Primarily we are acting 'as if' (in the subjunctive mood) we were doing what we actually do, give birth. And we are doing it in unison. In that bunch we are one body made up of many individuals, with the nubile girl at the core. I remember that bunch well, we were one body for a magic moment.'

When Bemba women, like the Ndembu, come together as a collective to teach a young bride, they

are collectively giving birth to a woman who has been equipped with the skills of what it means to be a Bemba married woman.

Similar to Pengo Ng'andu's (2014)¹⁸³ lament above, Esther Musama (2014) explained that she just began to have questions about some of the teachings in *imbusa* from the time she was being taught. She emphasized:

'One thing in life is that it's not everything you hear that is beneficial and really there are certain teachings they give you which just don't add up. In as much as they say tradition has to be upheld, we have to look at the levels, look at when these teachings were started and now, definitely we can't run away from the fact that things have changed, and some of them, regardless of whether they were done long ago or not, some of them are just too suppressive for a woman. When they are teaching me, I will not be able to say don't teach me this and that but I'll be able to weigh what I am taught and be able to see which one is applicable and what I should take seriously or not.'

Daisy Nwachuku (2006: 66) rightly argues:

'While in a patriarchal society, males are often accused by females of being the oppressors, a counterargument often put forward by men is that some of the obnoxious and repressive role functions of women, whether in religion or social matters, were formulated in the distance past by powerful elderly women for the purpose of female discipline in the areas of wifely submission, chastity, good maternal care, and for maintaining the aura of femininity.'

Nwachukwu's argument above reflects the fact that among the Bemba people, it is older women who are responsible for teaching *imbusa* to the young brides. Older women also tell stories in order to teach the young girls and boys about life, and caution them against a number of things that would cost them dearly if they did not heed instruction. The majority of women who teach *imbusa* and the most respected are elderly women who have little or no formal education. Due to the power dynamic that is at play when an uneducated older woman teaches an educated young woman, often *bacimbusa* try to prove a point that they know better concerning marriage. For example, Naphtali Nkole (2014) explained:

'And the elderly lady asked my mom if I had a problem that my mom wanted them to "fix."

¹⁸³ Pengo Ng'andu (2014), Interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (November).

While it is the mother of the bride who goes out to seek *banacimbusa* to teach her daughter, during the teaching, she (mother of the bride) is called upon by *banacimbusa* and asked about the behaviour and character of the bride. Generally, Zambians know that if a girl is always arguing her case and giving her opinions in discussions, a day will come when she will be “fixed”. Some of these *banacimbusa* perceive Bemba culture as monolithic and do not even attempt to understand how societies have changed and how modernity is transforming family and marriage life among young Bemba couples (Kaunda, 2013).

This means that while women who undergo *amafunde yambusa* know that “*things have changed*” (Esther Musama, 2014) from precolonial and postcolonial Zambia, *banacimbusa* are still teaching the women to be subservient. Esther Musama’s (2014) comment above illustrates how *amafunde yambusa* is still enshrined in the colonial patriarchal attitudes that are the legacies of the colonial period in Zambia. Africa, and Zambia in particular, cannot go back to precolonial times and ways of living; however, learning from that period can help in the case of Bemba career women, and how to embrace the postcolonial period and move with the times even when it comes to *imbusa* teachings. June Sampa (2014) explained:

What I was taught he was not taught, so I explained to him and we decided what to take out, what to keep and even include our own though it was not easy because he thought that everything I was taught was very beneficial at first. But I told him that it was not working for me, that’s why we had to sit and analyse what was necessary and beneficial.’

Later in marriage they begin to re-think what they see to be unnecessary or not beneficial. Similarly, Peni Chomba (2014)¹⁸⁴ explains:

Life is dynamic; I use what is appropriate to my current situation and leave the rest for later. For example, the importance of communication in a relationship is not given as much emphasis as is subordination. If I find my issue could be sorted out by simple communication with my spouse, I go that way. However, if being submissive will help build our relationship better, then that is what I will do.’

Her argument is similar to Nnaemeka’s (2003) who argues that African women do not take oppression unquestioningly; they can use it for their benefit. Women may not voice out the oppression, but it does not mean that they do not know; some women just begin to negotiate the

¹⁸⁴ Peni Chomba (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (November).

oppression without even stating that they are negotiating. It is true that not every woman has the courage to engage some of these oppressive traditions – as experience has shown, some women have become victims of culture. Phiri and Nadar (2009: 12) note that some women fatalistically resign to culture. One of their participants in a focus group gave a proverb, “One goes through the fire with one’s eyes wide open.” This demonstrates how women give up their negotiating power and just take some of the oppression unquestioningly. Yet it is established that while Bemba women do not question their instructors during the *imbusa* teachings, some definitely begin to negotiate these teachings at some point in their marriage and they know when to negotiate it or when to take it as it was taught, as Peni Chomba’s (2014)¹⁸⁵ response shows. Naphtali Nkole (2014)¹⁸⁶ also explained that

‘The teaching was given and I, like most brides, followed it but later I noticed that things were not working out. Well then I decided to change and navigate around the teachings. You know, it’s when women realize that while they are doing everything they were taught, the men are doing the exact opposite, then they change, and begin to go around the teachings for their own sanity. When women find that the man has begun taking advantage maybe in the way he talks to her and treats her, she begins to also see red flags that makes her to change as well.’

Danaya Wright (2012: 46) has explained that, “Under coverture, married women had virtually no public persona; they were to remain in a private sphere regulated by public laws but not inhabiting or controlling the public spaces that defined their lives.” This was replicated when the missionaries and colonial officials emphasised male headship in both public and private spheres. In the same way, Meenaksh Thapan (2012: 78) explains that “...women can learn ways and means with which to deal with the conflicts and struggles in life”. Further Thapan (2012: 77) has explained “...women engage in a twin-track process of compliance and resistance, submission and rebellion, silence and speech, to question their oppression in the family, community, and society.” This is what the Bemba women who participated in this research explained to me in ways that they negotiate *amafunde yambusa* in their homes. It seems that women go into marriage with teachings, expectations and limitations of what married life would be like; yet the men do not usually have limitations to various aspects of married life. This means that men have the freedom to do anything in marriage and this would be tolerated; if a woman does the same, there are consequences. That is why for instance, one high school teacher, Betty Nonde (2014), a participant in this study, explained that some of the teachings

¹⁸⁵ Peni Chomba (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (November).

¹⁸⁶ Natasha Nkole (2014) interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

in *imbusa* are not appropriate in current Zambia. However, a woman needs to be given such a teaching in case she marries a man that may need those rituals; she would not be found wanting or unable to do those rituals. Nancy Chomba,¹⁸⁷ like all the participants, explained:

I select from the teachings what is beneficial to me; there were things that were done in the old times which don't fit today.'

Similarly, Mulenga Mukupa¹⁸⁸ explained further:

'...you know as a woman you really have to be very clever, you have to gage, so you have to look at your spouse, what does he want? What does he expect me to do? Of course when you come out of those teachings you want to show him that you've been taught something and you know something so as you live together, you learn to understand you learn to know what your husband likes, and so you can choose. It's not everything that you can take; you have to see things that are beneficial.'

Mulenga Mukupa further reveals that to be able to navigate around these teachings in marriage a woman has to be “clever”, which means she should weigh her options very well then strike at the right time. This means, as Nnaemeka (2003) has already observed, that women find ways and means of turning a situation that would break them, to benefit them. Rasing (2001: 50) and Poewe (1981) observed the same, stating that Bemba women do things in a way that makes a spouse feel as though he is the one who made a decision when it was in fact the wife's premeditated decision. Naphtali Nkole (2014) further explained:

'Everything is there in imbusa teachings; it's up to that bride being taught to wisen up and see things for what they are. Being submissive is not what you think. As a career woman you make your own money hence, you submit to your husband in a subtle way. He thinks you are submitting but you know that you are actually on the same level with him. That's the teaching!'

Naphtali Nkole affirms Rasing's (2001) observation that Bemba women are decision makers in the marriage, and when they ask their spouses, they have already decided and the man thinks he is the one who made that decision. Bemba women have been negotiating their positions in their homes and have been agents of life-giving aspects in the culture. Most of the participants affirmed that it was not easy to start negotiating their teachings in the homes because men,

¹⁸⁷ Nancy Chomba (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (October).

¹⁸⁸ Mulenga Mukupa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (November).

‘...are not taught their responsibility, they are just taught what to expect from a woman, that’s why we have issues. A woman goes into marriage with a man who knows exactly what to expect from her but he doesn’t know what he is supposed to do for her, because you know it is a two-way thing, I am a woman I am a human being, I’ve got emotions and all, if I am going to take a month or two on how to take care of a man then definitely I expect him to be trained on how to take care of me. So actually you find, it’s concerned on taking care of a man than a woman.’ (Esther Musama 2014).

A day or two before the wedding, the couple is taught together for one or two hours. Basically, the groom is told what to expect on the wedding night and more of what the bride has been taught for the duration of *amafunde yambusa*. Besides that, men are not in any lengthy teachings compared to women. For this reason, Bemba career women who participated in this research explained that in the first year or two (for some even five) of marriage, they do not negotiate the teachings because the man knows exactly what a woman should do and when she should it. No matter how educated a woman becomes or what position she holds in the public sphere, she is expected to behave in a culturally acceptable way. The case of the two first ladies of Zambia (Mrs Satan ad Mrs Mwanawasa) is a case in point. There seems to be a tension between *imbusa* and formal education as the participants showed.

8.3.3. Trapped Between Tradition and Modernity: Navigating the Conflictive Consciousness of Bemba Career Women’s Gender Identity

During the period of my fieldwork, I encountered numerous men and women that expressed great interest in my research. In informal discussions they would raise statements that implied that career women become overbearing even toward their spouses, hence the increase in the rate of divorce. One of the participants, Delfister Ngosa (2014),¹⁸⁹ had a lengthy comment and emphasized that after work, as a woman,

‘you can bring your work at home and do a bit of it but immediately you reach home, you put on the coat of a wife. You focus on your husband despite being so tired!!! Because a man has an ego, a man when he goes home, that’s the haven of rest, a place of peace from all the trouble as long as the woman has made an atmosphere. You know a woman makes an atmosphere in the home? That is why this teaching is important because you

¹⁸⁹ Delfister Ngosa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

will be taught all this. A home is like a city of refuge where a man goes and seeks refuge. That's what a man wants, after a long day at work, even if he doesn't find his wife; he'll just fall into the seat/sofa because the wife has made an atmosphere.'

In my Master's research one participant whom I will call Lydia Pensulo (2012)¹⁹⁰ lamented that:

'... it's kind of like you are somebody else in your work environment, you are somebody else in your friend's environment but when you are in your home you feel like you are completely nothing which I think is not how it should be, you are supposed to feel the same in all circles of life.'

Due to the fact that in *amafunde yambusa* a woman is taught that in the home she has to take care of her husband and his needs to the point of almost neglecting her own, most women have resigned their jobs while others have been asked to leave employment by their spouses and are stay-at-home wives. The participants gave examples of their cousins, sisters, friends, or neighbours who have been asked to leave employment by their husbands and they left stating that their husbands were making enough money to support the family. My close relative also left stable employment because her husband demanded her to do so. However, this raises a question as to whether women's career is about financial liberation alone or it is about fulfilment as well. Gaviga (1996:258) points out that in Canada at one time a woman who worked outside the home was seen and expected to be single and with no dependents to take care of. Delfister Ngosa's (2014) comment above shows that at home, a Bemba career woman is seen as a wife, mother and so on, and there is nothing to do with her work/corporate life. Bemba career women move between two worlds, home and workplace, hence the conflictive identity.¹⁹¹ It seems that Bemba career married women struggle with what they were taught in *imbusa* and what they can choose to be. They hold on to the *imbusa* teaching because a woman who has undergone *imbusa* teachings earns a social identity and she is not ostracised. On the other hand, they want to choose to be independent. However, they cannot be completely independent because of the socialisation from *imbusa* in its postcolonial state. The question that this raises is: how can career women chart their own identity as taught women without being subsumed

¹⁹⁰ Lydia Pensulo (2012), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Pietermaritzburg (August).

¹⁹¹ Bemba women living and working in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia seem to move between two worlds (work and home) and they insist, "*these are two different institutions*". There is a binary between these two spaces; one is a manager for example at work and a wife at home, which means work cannot be brought in the home. Women face contradiction between their homes and workplaces. Conflictive consciousness is used here as Bemba women being torn between their identity in the private sphere and in the public sphere.

by the teaching? Delfister Ngosa (2014)¹⁹² explained that Pentecostal women have select aspects of the *imbusa* teaching that they have removed because “*there is tradition that is purely demonic, there is tradition that is outdated and tradition that aligns with the word of God*” within *imbusa*. While Pentecostal women have redefined *imbusa* to fit their context, they have also held onto some colonial perceptions of African culture (*imbusa* in this case); nevertheless, they have opened up discussion for redefining *imbusa*. This means that the *imbusa* teaching is fluid not static and one can extract aspects that fit well with their context. Is it possible that uneducated *banacimbusa* are insecure when they teach educated young brides? This is all the more reason a career woman should be invited to teach young brides – so that they can balance the teachings and not lean on one side, that of the private sphere, while leaving out the other equally important public sphere. If Pentecostal women have redefined and selected from *imbusa* what is beneficial to Pentecostal Christian married women, then there is a possibility and feasibility of redefining *imbusa* for career women. The fact that the participants in this study are career women does not mean that their experiences are the same; however, there are similarities and shared experiences. Esther Musama (2014)¹⁹³ gives a lengthy lamentation of what a career married woman deals with on a daily basis in her home:

‘... here is a woman that wakes up early in the morning, takes care of the kids and does the laundry; he’ll (husband) wait for you to prepare water for him to bath. And here is a man that just gets up finds everything is done, he gets ready to go (to work), for some women you find that they are getting to do the same kind of work (he does) and there are certain jobs that are strenuous. Here is a woman that gets back from that kind of a (strenuous) job and probably the man was even home earlier resting; you find the man seated in the couch busy with a newspaper. A woman gets home and just puts down the bag and gets in the kitchen and maybe he’s shouting on top of his voice wanting to be served and you know it just doesn’t end there; when you go to the bedroom, there is some more work that has to be done and at the end of the day you ask a question that who takes care of a woman? Who just takes care of a woman? So you find people say that women are snappy etc. it’s not just about being snappy probably you get to deal with a frustrated person, a person that is so stressed with work, so tired of taking care of maybe other people without being taken care of herself.’

Esther Musama (2014)¹⁹⁴ asks a very relevant question and it is from her experience as a married career woman that she draws her line of questioning. In a similar way, Hill-Collins (2000: 259) notes that for women, “knowledge comes from experience”. Experience is important not only for women but men as well because experience leads to intentional transformation. For instance, among some

¹⁹² Delfister Ngosa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

¹⁹³ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

¹⁹⁴ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

of the Bemba women, the experience of marital teachings in their homes opens their eyes to negotiation of the teaching so that they begin to question aspects of their lived experiences. It is almost as if being in marriage gives them a new set of lenses through which they begin to see the teachings and how these teachings could assist them differently if they were taught differently. After receiving marital instructions, some women learn ways of negotiating these teachings and some of them pass on their agency to young brides. Esther Musama's (2014)¹⁹⁵ lamentation is that while both spouses have careers, a woman's career extends beyond the workplace; she has more chores at home. This means for a Bemba married career woman that she works before she gets to her office, works at the office and still comes back home to work some more. There was often a sense from some participants like Esther Musama above, that men have become comfortably accustomed to the fact that their wives will prepare their bath water, clothes, breakfast and the lunch that they take to work while they are simultaneously doing the same for themselves (wives). Yet after such a lamentation, Esther Musama (2014)¹⁹⁶ further comments:

'...You know those are two different institutions (marriage and work). There has to be that balance whereby if I leave the office, my position, my everything remains at the office; when I get home I take on being a wife and what is a wife supposed to do? Biblically I have to be submissive whether I am paid more than the husband, whether I hold a better position than him. When I am in the home I am his wife and I have to take up that role, but maybe that's why these guys (banacimbusa marriage mentors) are scared to teach that (women taking up careers), but this time women are slowly being empowered and maybe that aspect needs to be included in the teachings.'

Religion and culture are good bedfellows and the participants often turned to religion, culture and the Bible to explain certain cultural aspects of *imbusa*, as in the above quote from Esther Musama (2014).¹⁹⁷ Even Mulenga Mukupa who is not affiliated to any religion would quote scripture "*proverbs 31 talks about a woman being hardworking.*" The question raised here is: what is (if there is) the interplay between these two worlds, home and workplace? Does the identity of the home or domestic private life build on the work identity or does the work public/social identity build the home identity? How is a career woman to balance between these two worlds that she lives in? Eliza Getman (2014: 7) gives her positionality as a female Anglican priest who is also a mother. Getman (2014: 8-9) explains the dilemma "...everyday I would race (late again) to fetch my own children from school and switch

¹⁹⁵ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

¹⁹⁶ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

¹⁹⁷ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

gears to be in mother mode... Motherhood and ministry are my dual vocations.” This means that the conflictive identity for career women is not only among the Bemba women, it can be argued that globally career women go through these motions.

Esther Musama (2014)¹⁹⁸ presents a binary between the private and the public sphere as many people have done even in the process of this fieldwork; other participants have also separated the two. Esther Musama (2014) suggests that the two are different institutions and a career woman needs to deal with the two institutions according to the law that governs each institution. Nevertheless, men and some women still use *amafunde yambusa* to strip a woman of her position in the work place (meaning that they use a rule that applies in the private realm to apply to a woman in the public realm for their own benefit) as demonstrated in the previous chapter. However, her dichotomizing of the two spheres does not pertain to women being in the private sphere. She explains that women can be in both spheres and learn how to handle both worlds without neglecting one. Often they manage, except of course that the separation of public and private spheres relegates women to the family and men to the workplace just as most feminists have argued. Both family and work place are important to women and men, therefore there is a need for Bemba men to be involved in family chores as much as their spouses are. However, Delfister Ngosa (2014) argued that it is the responsibility of a woman to take care of her home no matter how tired from career work she may be:

‘...a career woman needs to have wisdom to balance between home and work, for an African set up, even if you knock off at 11 pm you need to put things in order. You are a career woman, buy a washing machine and vacuum cleaner to make it easy for you, these days people cook food and keep in a deep freezer and wash and iron so that your husband from Monday to Friday has clean ironed clothes to wear. There is also flasks and food warmers I believe things to help us are there, if you have a man that understands then you are lucky but if it’s a man who always says “bring me this and that” you are in trouble. Men are different, you have to master what your husband is like. Prepare breakfast for him because you are a wife at home. When you said yes, you knew what you were entering into, if you didn’t want to be working in your home because you are a career woman you have no time you should have remained single.’

Delfister Ngosa (2014)¹⁹⁹ suggests that the only way a career woman can help herself is by buying tools and equipment that can make the household chores easier and manageable. This suggests that

¹⁹⁸ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

¹⁹⁹ Delfister Ngosa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

she believes a husband cannot share in the household chores, and the wife has no option but to be able to care for her home as if she was stay-at-home wife. By implication, this does not change the structures of patriarchy; rather it just makes them manageable. This means that even if the family/couple has house help, the wife has to be the one who cooks her husband's food specifically and not their house help. In an informal discussion after the interview, one participant explained:

My husband used to be so difficult when we just got married. He would never eat any food cooked by someone else. He only ate what I cooked, even if his own sister cooked for him, he would wait for me to come home and cook for him. It was a very difficult period for me as I would be tired from work and went home to work further.'

After the two-hour report given to men before their wedding, most men hold their wives to the fact that they will have to carry out all they were taught. Participant Mulenga Mukupa (2014)²⁰⁰ argued that the only uninterrupted time she has to spend with her family is the weekend because she works long hours during week days, therefore, she cannot be taking care of her husband's and children's laundry at the expense of spending time with them on weekends. While Delfister Ngosa (2014)²⁰¹ is against the idea that the couple's house-help should wash and cook for the family, that is the only way Mulenga Mukupa's family would have time together. In order to handle both institutions, a Bemba woman has received *imbusa* instructions for the home and formal education for the work place while Bemba men have received academic training and not traditional *amafunde yambusa* that Bemba women receive. It has been the responsibility of the woman/wife to teach her husband the tradition she has received through *banacimbusa*. When the groom comes for the *imbusa* teachings, it is usually *banacimbusa* reporting to him what his bride has been taught. When I underwent the teaching, for example, my spouse was told in an hour what they took two weeks to teach me and it was a report to explain they had taught me and I would live by the code of *imbusa*. It is important to note that women's teachings always push women to the private sphere where they are to do things for their spouses and behave in a certain way that society deems acceptable for married women. Only one of the participants explained that her husband comes in to do some house chores such as cooking and packing the children's lunch for school while she gives the children baths and prepare them for school. Below is her explanation of how her husband works in the home compared to the

²⁰⁰ Esther Musam (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

²⁰¹ Delfister Ngosa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

other participants who explained that they have to do everything for their spouses in readiness for work:

I am grateful for the husband that I have. I'll give you an example; I'd be giving baths to the kids (there is another girl that I live with, she is in grade one, she's about seven besides my daughter). Hubby would be packing lunch for them while I bath them, that was not in the teaching!! So it's like we are meeting half way, so I'd be dressing them up and he'd be preparing them breakfast, and am sure why he does that is so that we are not late for work, but it's not like I am the one who just told him to say ok "I'll wash the kids and you do their lunch boxes", no, but he'll just come in where he sees that I have shortfalls because he is my partner. So you find that if he sees that I am running late, he won't sit and wait for me and say until I finish and serve him a cup, I'd find he has made his cup but that was not in the teaching. But of course if people are there and around, if he is at home he just sits because he knows that people won't understand. They'd go out saying "he's been given muti" you know. And it's an understanding.' (Pengo Ng'andu 2014).

This explanation by Pengo Ng'andu also suggests there is a level where men themselves are able to take up responsibility and work at a partnership level with their spouses. Some men would want their spouse to take all they were taught in *amafunde yambusa* and use it in the marriage, to the minute detail. Then, there are those men who behave counter culture and subversively work together with their spouse on a partnership level for the good of their relationship and family. Of course, some men would argue that they follow everything they were taught for the benefit of the family. Again, Pengo Ng'andu's (2014) explanation demonstrates why most men do not want to share in household chores – because other people (friends and family) would begin to suspect that a man that cooks, cleans and does laundry while his wife is at home has been given *muti*. This kind of a man is usually said to be “under petticoat government” in Zambia. A married man can only cook and wash his clothes if he has been “bewitched” by his wife to do so because he was told that his wife would do everything for him and not with him. The only time a married man can wash and cook is when his wife is critically ill. One other participant narrated:

When in university, we had a doctor who was teaching us gender but when you go to her home the doctor will be a different woman. She goes to traditional standards. All the equality she teaches in class goes out the window. As for me, I know that at work I am boss and at home I am going to try to be as much as I can but I am not going to be subservient and be trampled on. I'll be as respectful as I can and put my issues across. But I am not going to be a “yes” person and let things go out of control.’ (Sandy Matipa 2014).²⁰²

²⁰² Sandy Matipa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

This statement shows that to some extent, career women are struggling with dual or conflictive consciousness of identity, whereby at work they are firm and able to command men around and at home they are timid and follow whatever decisions their spouse makes. While these Bemba married career women have aspects of experiences in common, there are some experiences that are personal, and such experiences are not the same as the seemingly similar experiences of another woman. The statement above resonates with the words of a participant who is in gender advocacy. She said in an interview “*at work I am a feminist but at home I am a wife and a mother*”. There is a failure in balancing between tradition and modernity as well as understanding which of the two worlds is feeding on the other. On the one hand, the career space seems to function within a modernized space which can be easily challenged by women using feminist tools which emerge from the modern space. On the other hand, the marriage space remains trapped in a colonial ‘state’ where women were not allowed to work outside the home for wages. With the participants’ responses, it seems that *imbusa* does not give women critical gendered tools to challenge this space for gender justice and equality. This can be seen from the two participants who demonstrate that they do not have the ability to negotiate the teachings in their homes. However, when one listens to the responses carefully, Bemba women have learnt through their own experiences to negotiate and handle issues in their homes in a way that is life-giving. It is in this context that Peni Chomba (2014), one of the participants in this study, argued that *banacimbusa*,

‘...should encourage young brides to pursue careers or at least get involved in some form of income generating activity. This is because the economic times require us as spouses and mothers to help support our spouses’ efforts. Apart from that, we have a lot of talent among the young brides that can bring a lot of benefit to the communities that they live in and that would help make the world a better place.’

8.3.4. Husband as Provider: Some Salaries are More Equal than Others

During *amafunde yambusa*, Bemba women are taught that the man is the provider in the family, whether they as women are in employment or not. The concept of a man as a provider and breadwinner is emphasized. One participant, June Sampa (2014),²⁰³ exclaimed in the interview:

²⁰³ June Sampa (2014), Interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (November).

I was told that my husband will be providing for my every need, what I needed to do is welcome him home when he comes back from work, take off his shoes, massage his feet and give him food; in their minds, they could not envision that I will ever work!!!”

In the same vein, Esther Musama (2014)²⁰⁴ explained that because her husband was taught what he should expect from her, “his salary caters for the family’s big projects like building, buying cars and other family property while mine goes toward bills and groceries in the home, we even share paying our kids’ school fees”. Shelley Gavigan (1996: 257) has similarly explained that the idea that an employed man has to earn enough in order to provide for his family ideally means that the wife’s place was at home and any income she earned was of secondary importance. Simply put, the husband’s salary is more important and has more value than the wife’s salary. It has become a trend among most Zambian couples to build their own houses and business properties; this is one aspect that is trivialized, glossed over or totally overlooked in *imbusa* teachings. According to the participants, even when *banacimbusa* are aware of these new trends, they never conscientise the brides on how the couple can own property jointly or at least some property in one spouse’s name and another in the other spouse’s name. Participant June Sampa (2014) explained that they have several properties that they have built together as a couple, and that are all registered in her husband’s name. Any attempt from her to try and have some properties in her name fall on deaf ears as her husband believes that there is nothing wrong with their entire properties being in his name.²⁰⁵ Similarly, Tamale (2011: 11) stresses “...where land had been communally owned in precolonial societies, this was replaced by a tenure system that allowed for absolute and individual (and predominantly male) ownership of land”. One other interesting comment was from a participant Pengo Ng’andu (2014)²⁰⁶ who confirmed that even when it comes to finances, she was taught in *imbusa* that her husband is the provider; the extent to which this teaching was taken by the couple is interesting:

But even just the issue of finances in the home, so there is this money (she shows me some money that her husband had just given her while I was interviewing her), I don’t even know where he has got it from because we are not yet paid but he has just brought it cause he wants me to get one or two things. But if I have money in the account, why should my husband go and borrow? It doesn’t make sense because that debt at one point it’s both of us that will be in debt. So when I have, why not use mine... I got married while I was working, but I was told that my husband should be providing for me as in provide for me completely. And that

²⁰⁴ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her office in Chingola (October).

²⁰⁵ It is important to clarify here that the current default marriage system in Zambia is based on community of property, which means that a couple shares their assets and liabilities as a single estate, in which each spouse has equal share.

²⁰⁶ Pengo Ng’andu (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (November).

was good in the early years but then with time, it was more like I'd get my monies and really not know what to do with it. I had to wait for him to say "oh now we are buying a TV" but I was also in employment so when we sat down and said "we are having these deficits so why can't I put in something so that we do not have to wait for two months to do something but we only do that thing in one month because I'd have gotten my money and his, put together and that big project is done?" But meanwhile what I was taught was that my money is my money.'

This is another comment, which shows that a husband's salary is usually understood to be for big family projects such as building a house or a family business while a wife's salary is usually to buy groceries and paying bills etc., as stated above. Pengo Ng'andu's (2014)²⁰⁷ experience in the first four years of marriage was that her husband could not take her money, because a woman for whom he is supposed to provide earns the money. This means that he did not see her to be at the same level as himself; he had to be the one giving and providing her with money not the other way around. In a time of desperation, he would rather borrow than ask his wife. Poewe (1983) observed that in precolonial Zambia, husband and wife worked together to support their family. This, for the Bemba men, is what it means to be a co-provider, with his wife, to their families. Could being a provider extend to encouraging one's wife work on her career and "climb" the corporate ladder? It is a norm for a woman to stay home and receive her husband's salary, however, it is perceived as unnatural for a man to stay home and receive his wife's salary. When a man loses his job and his wife becomes the breadwinner, it is common in Zambia to call such a man as '*John isa uhye ubwali*.' This is translated as "John come and eat". A man who does not work to provide for his family and is taken care of financially by a woman (his wife) is seen as lazy. Taking care of one's husband is taught in *imbusa*; however, it is taking care of his physical needs such as satisfying him sexually, providing good food, washing and cleaning after him and giving him children etc. The other aspect of taking care of a husband financially is never taught. '*John isa uhye ubwali*' is a derogatory term used for a man who is or has become dependent on his parents, wife or sister and brother. That is why, in Pengo Ng'andu's situation, her husband would rather borrow money than ask for it from his wife. Women generally have always been there encouraging their spouses as they climb career ladders, while it has been a different case for husbands to do the same for their wives. This is different from the married women in early Britain. Claudia Zaher (2002: 260) explains how it worked for married women who had wage labour outside the home: "Any income from property she brought into the marriage was controlled

²⁰⁷ Pengo Ng'andu (2014), Interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in her home in Chingola (November).

by her husband, and if she earned wages outside the home, those wages belonged to him. If he contracted debts, her property went to cover his expenses.” For Bemba women, they had to wait on their husbands for financial provision during the colonial era; while in precolonial times they had to work together in order to provide for the family. In an era where women are increasingly involved in wage paying employments outside the home, the struggle is how to use the wife’s salary. Should a husband use his wife’s salary? This is acceptable for a few men while they are working as well; however, in the case of a husband who has lost a job, the predicament is that he will be called “John *isa uhye ubwal?*” if he starts to depend upon his wife’s income.

8.4. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the lived experiences of Bemba married career women in their homes. It is clear that these women have shared experiences and are agents of their own wellbeing in marriage. Their agency is depicted in how they navigate the *amafunde yambusa* teachings by going around them or cutting across them when necessary. A career woman’s work is never done, according to the data collected; she goes to work at her place of work and comes home to do more work.

CHAPTER NINE

TRANSFORMING TRADITION: DEVELOPING FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS FOR 21ST CENTURY BEMBA MARRIED CAREER WOMEN

It [amafunde yambusa] was a good thing at that time 'cause it looked at dealing with the needs of that time but you see time has been evolving, so many things have changed but we are still stuck on to the same stuff. The only thing lacking with this is improvement. Moving with old teachings doesn't help. I think that's no wonder we have a lapse but if even these women (banacimbusa) should be trained and learn to appreciate women empowerment if they understand it, it would be very easy to incorporate, just look at the people they'll hire to teach!!! - Esther Musama (2014)²⁰⁸

9.0. Introduction

The previous two chapters dealt with collected and produced data from fieldwork. The findings and discussions were thematically analysed. They looked specifically at how Bemba career married women appropriate *amafunde yambusa* in both home and work place, respectively. The chapters analysed whether the women have been completely faithful to the teachings or they have been negotiating them in their own way, and whether *imbusa* should continue to be taught in the same way it was taught in pre-colonial and colonial Zambia, and who should teach it. I will start by stating how I used feminist consciousness in this chapter. Feminist consciousness is women's political stance against patriarchy and forces that try to negate their fullness of life, and their becoming aware of their agency in community.

Imbusa, *icisungu* and *chilangizo* are cultural practices that have developed over the years in Zambia and have been a space of women's marital teachings. Mushibwe (2009: 248) is right in stating, "Cultural traditions carry images and norms of the members of a given society and this may determine the types of roles considered appropriate for each member". Among the Bemba people, women were accorded much respect, and they needed to go through *amafunde yambusa* to learn how they should live in society. Their political and religious involvement in the community was significant and as

²⁰⁸ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

such, women were accorded respect in the private and public spheres. This is why, with the establishment of missionary Churches for instance, most of the women moved to a woman initiated church (Lumpa), where Lenshina Mulenga was the priest (Kaunda and Nadar, 2012: 346). The presence and involvement of Bemba women in political and community engagements was necessary for the transformation of the Bemba people. Women and men worked together among the Bemba. Hinfelaar (1994: 77)²⁰⁹ noted that Lenshina Mulenga was politically involved and was advocating for the Bemba people to return to their indigenous ways that the missionaries and colonial officials had regarded as pagan.

The current chapter examines the implications of the analysis and provides a way forward for *imbusa* in contemporary Zambia for the empowerment of Bemba career women. I propose a curriculum for career women among the Bemba in the Copperbelt province of Zambia where the field research was done. This proposed curriculum will carry some of the teachings from the previous traditional curriculum. In outlining the teachings for career women in 21st century Zambia, I will briefly explain how *imbusa* can be taught to fit the changing social landscapes in Zambia as well as the skills required for *banacimbusa* to teach *imbusa*. I admit that this proposed curriculum is not exhaustive, but rather acts as a heuristic device for raising questions concerning *amafunde yambusa* for career women in contemporary Zambia. In this thesis, I have conceptualised *Imbusa* teachings should be conceptualised as a curriculum because *imbusa* has always been regarded as a school where women have learnt about their involvement in the community. Skills and mastery of skills is taught in this space. There is teaching and learning processes going on in this space and both the teachers (*banacimbusa*) and students benefit from the *imbusa*. The teachers, *banacimbusa*, may not directly learn from the students as the students are often passive, rather they learn from other women who are invited in the teaching space of *imbusa*. According to William Pinar (2004: 2), “the interdisciplinary study of educational experience” is known as curriculum theory. This is important for the conceptualisation of *imbusa* as curriculum because then the proposed progressive curriculum is an interdisciplinary one as it will not only focus on premarital teaching, it will also focus on career and other aspects of everyday life. Pinar (2004: 16) has further shown that “point of view of curriculum theory is a matter of enabling students to employ academic knowledge... to understand their own

²⁰⁹ See also Kaunda and Nadar 2012.

self-formation within society and the world”. *Banacimbusa* have been tasked to equip young Bemba brides in the ways of Bemba people, in so doing there is an opportunity to give the young brides a chance at selfformation after they have undergone *imbusa* teachings. A teaching that gives a chance to the learners to apply the lessons received to their everyday experiences and be able to formulate new teachings from such experiences is a progressive teaching. It is unfortunate that *banacimbusa* having undergone the same teaching, they do not seem to change the teaching in order to assist the young brides. Several participants in this study acknowledged that *imbusa* teachings are stuck in an unknown past. I argued in chapter four that *imbusa* teachings were colonized and as Phillip Higgs (2016: 1) stresses “there is an existential and humane need today to decolonise the curriculum in Africa by means of postcolonial education systems that reclaim indigenous African voices through curriculum reforms and the transformation of education discourses”. *Imbusa* curriculum needs to be reformed if it will meet the needs of the 21st century career woman.

9.1. *Imbusa* Teachings at a Glance

Imbusa functions as a space for encouraging Bemba women in their positions in society as married women. At the same time, it would seem paradoxical that Bemba women are taught that men are to be heads. *Banacimbusa* usually play a symbolic role of a husband during the teaching and mould a young Bemba bride in ways that they believe a husband would appreciate. In fact, all the participants affirmed that there is no dialogue in the teaching, as the learners who are the initiates are to take all that they are taught without questioning. For instance, Pengo Ng’andu (2014)²¹⁰ stated:

‘the imbusa teaching was similar to when they are teaching in nursing. They say that this is like in the army, its like you don’t question what the authority is doing.’

The participants also acknowledged the desire for some of the teachings to be re-examined. In this regard, Collins (2000: xi) similarly explains “...but as social conditions change, these ties must be rethought”. The interplay of power, social status, knowledge etc. works effectively in controlling women during *amafunde yambusa* and follows through to their homes. In fact, Richards’ (1982) observation is right that there are hierarchies of power within the *imbusa* teaching space. The learners and the bride’s family give older women, who are usually the trainers of young brides, much respect.

²¹⁰ Pengo Ng’andu (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

This often leads to the point that the bride is not allowed to say anything unless she has been directly spoken to or asked to speak. These are some of the aspects of *amafunde yambusa* that are replicated in homes, as highlighted in the previous chapters. Every thing done in *imbusa* is for a purpose; even actions by *banacimbusa* are teachings in themselves. Francis Nyamnjoh (2012: 2) similarly explains, “The production, positioning and consumption of knowledge is far from a neutral, objective and disinterested process...” Since teaching is not neutral, I propose a need for *banacimbusa* to adopt a balanced position in the way career women are taught *imbusa* in order to integrate critical aspects emerging from contemporary feminist research and current debates on gender issues. This means that there is a need to involve gender justice personnel²¹¹ as well as other professionals like health workers in order to empower women about their agency. This also means that *imbusa* could become that critical space where women are exposed to gender empowering knowledge and an institution where they can report cases that may affect them in their homes. Because *banacimbusa* are usually older than the brides they teach, they are accorded utmost respect as they are deemed to have a wealth of knowledge concerning marriage and relationships. Therefore, they have power to teach the young brides from their experiences of being married women. The experiential knowledge *banacimbusa* accumulate over the years give them power and social standing in community.

Involving professional women in *imbusa* teaching as the curriculum for 21st century Bemba career women does not mean that all the teaching processes and content will be done away with. For instance, maintaining the performance of the *imbusa* teachings through songs is essential given that Bemba people teach through songs; however, there is a need for new contextual songs to be composed that would be more viable for career women. Some songs that are sung during *imbusa* are disempowering to women. For instance, Corbeil (1982: 38) records “*Matako mwangalanwila, nga wanakilila ukafwala cimbi*” (translated as, ‘your buttocks are stripped; if you are docile, you will have a new outfit’). In this song, a woman is taught to be docile and subservient to her husband in order for her to receive gifts and day-to-day upkeep from her husband. In *imbusa* teaching, the verbal arts are a crucial medium of political contestation, unification of women, and a means through which the

²¹¹ These are persons who work with gender issues or persons who seek the equality of women and men in society.

young brides are taught. Therefore, songs have functioned as doubled-edged swords for young brides.

The need for Bemba married career women to be made aware of debates on gender issues from the *imbusa* space is critical because this is a space that is of importance to them. Such awareness can be made known to other women through *banacimbusa* themselves being well equipped in that regard. Martha Mzyece Mapala (2004), in her Master's thesis, empirically researched *alangizi*, which is a Chewa term for *banacimbusa*. She specifically researched marriage counsellors in the *Alangizi* national association of Zambia (ANAZ). Mapala (2004: 18) noted that just because this association exists does not mean that all *alangizi/banacimbusa* are part of it. Most *alangizi/banacimbusa* operate independently of the association. The human rights organisation in Zambia has called on *Alangizi* in the association to observe rights of women if they are to be recognised by the community and that they should have a methodology for teaching which reflects the contemporary context. Yet this remains to be done as most of the women who are involved in teaching the rite have little or no education that can help them to engage issues such as gender justice. Participant Nancy Chomba (2014)²¹² narrated explicitly that:

Most of them [banacimbusa] are these housewives, there are those who are lucky and are trained by career women because they will be able to share their experiences and all. But if you are just with those who are uneducated completely, then you are in trouble.'

Most, if not all, participants explained that educated *banacimbusa* are just coming up now and are just a handful. Most of them are uneducated and this is their job; in fact, one other participant exclaimed that these *banacimbusa* have “PhDs” in these teachings. In order to effectively deliver teachings to career women, *banacimbusa* are themselves to be awakened to issues that career women face in their work places. As teachers of *imbusa*, *banacimbusa* intentionally or unintentionally communicate certain skills to their students who also tend to replicate *banacimbusa's* actions in their homes. Merfat Alsubaie (2015: 125) explains that there are “unspoken or implicit values, behaviors, and norms that exist in the educational setting.” Hence, the need for *banacimbusa* to be well versed in issues of experiences of a career woman in order to pass that teaching rigorously. Nancy Chomba (2014)²¹³

²¹² Nancy Chomba (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

²¹³ Nancy Chomba (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

further suggested:

I think the syllabus needs to be revised, we are now exposed to various ways things can be done and people are talking about marriage loosely; it's not as sacred as it was before.

Most of these traditional counsellors work independently for various reasons, one of which is that they could possibly be unaware of the existence of this association despite the fact that it has been in existence since 1997, or they feel that it is economically effective to work on their own. During fieldwork, it became clear that career women in the Copperbelt Province of Zambia are well aware of the changes in the world and most of them expressed dissatisfaction with the way *amafunde yambusa* have remained stagnant. The participants in this study revealed that they are actually looking for balance between modern western education and traditional *amafunde yambusa*. For instance, Esther Musama (2014)²¹⁴ narrated:

'...not everything in imbusa is bad; there are things that are beneficial, but I think what we need is to make modern education and imbusa compatible. We know that modern education leaves a family gap but again we know to say that imbusa alone leaves a gap on the empowerment. If we can have both we would be better people.'

9.2. Between Modern Education and Indigenous Traditions

Most, if not all, the participants in this study expressed feelings and views of wanting *imbusa* teachings to address issues that matter in the lives of women. While the participants expressed a need to modify some aspects of the rite, others like Mulenga Mukupa (November 2014)²¹⁵ were explicitly comfortable with *imbusa* as it is taught currently. She stated that,

'We have to be careful not to dilute our traditions, that's where the trouble comes in... because when you are getting married they'll always tell you that you have to make sure you wash your husband's clothes, you always have to make sure you cook your husband food etc. But for a person like me, I leave this house early in the morning, I come back late, some weekends I work, on Sunday I'll have to go to church, so if I have to spend time with my husband I have to make sure that it's a Saturday afternoon and I don't have to be washing and cleaning, I have to spend time with my husband and children even on Sunday so I can't start cleaning up. Then

²¹⁴ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

²¹⁵ Mulenga Mukupa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

I'll have to get a maid and such things are not so much encouraged in our traditions; a woman is supposed to work at home, which modernly you can't manage because you need an extra hand to help you.'

Ironically, Mulenga Mukupa (2014) still negotiates and navigates her received teachings by hiring an extra hand to help while she is at work or spending time with her family which *banacimbusa* would not allow. The very act of hiring house help is agency and navigation of *amafunde yambusa* on the part of a Bemba woman who has been taught and cultured to be the one who takes care of her family in all aspects. In this sense, Mulenga Mukupa (2014)²¹⁶ seems to be similarly in support of modifying aspects of *imbusa* teachings. Jane Soothill (2009: 29) has argued that “whilst women and men as acting ‘subjects’ may resist, challenge or reshape ‘structures’, they can never operate wholly outside them and therefore must inevitably be subject to them.” This means for Bemba women, that indeed there has to be a balance between the indigenous and modern or academic education. In fact, Mulenga Mukupa (2014)²¹⁷ puts this point better, affirming succinctly that:

‘traditional teachings are important and no matter how educated you are you have roots, something that makes you proud to say I am Bemba. Education (academic) can never take the place of imbusa. Imbusa mano yachifyalilwa (imbusa is indigenous knowledge) while education (modern/academic) will teach you how to write and in securing yourself employable. Imbusa doesn't (secure one employable) and (academic) education can't take its place.’

Bemba women who have the same qualifications as men are required to go through *imbusa* teachings to be marriageable while men do not have to go through these teachings. Both women and men have roots that they need to be proud of and that is why the proposed *imbusa* curriculum includes sessions where both the bride and groom have to be taught together. This response implies that while a woman can be educated with stable employment, without *imbusa* she would not be equipped to run her home in the ways of the Bemba and Zambian people. In the same way, Pamela Kalenga (2014)²¹⁸ explained:

‘...according to tradition, academic education has posed a threat to culture in that traditionalists feel that their culture has been diluted. I think we need to balance up, in traditional education there are things that are good as well as in modern education so if we bring them together it's like spicing them up. Including these teachings in the curriculum would be very helpful rather than throwing it out.’

²¹⁶ Mulenga Mukupa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

²¹⁷ Mulenga Mukupa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (November).

²¹⁸ Pamela Kalenga (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

This means that the two types of education need to complement each other in order to empower women for both the private and public spheres, as argued in chapter seven and eight. Tyson Yunkaporta (2010: 5) has cautioned that combining indigenous practices with education “must be approached with transparency and rigour, as there is a danger that they will be defined in terms of the exotic, which only serves to marginalize indigenous perspectives in the world of research”. While some Bemba women are excited about not just the transformation of the *imbusa* teachings, they are also interested in the academic curriculum including some aspects of *imbusa* and vice versa. Caution is recommended for the success of this inclusion of aspects that have been apart for a long time. Esther Musama (2014), in the opening statement of this chapter, clearly stated that “...*moving with old teachings doesn’t help...*” the question therefore arises, who should teach *imbusa* to a 21st century career Bemba woman?

9.2.1. Banacimbusa’s *Centrality to Amafunde Yambusa*

Banacimbusa are critical and central to the *imbusa* teaching space and participants in this study lamented at how Zambian society has shifted in many aspects while *imbusa* is still taught as it was decades ago; at least much of the content has not changed to fit with the contemporary context. Esther Musama (2014)²¹⁹ argued that

‘in much as they say tradition has to be upheld, we have to look at the levels, look at when these teachings were started and now, definitely we can’t run away from the fact that things have changed, and some of them [amafunde yambusa], regardless of whether they were done long ago or not, some of them are just too suppressive for a woman.’

The need for a progressive *imbusa* teaching cannot be over emphasised. Bemba women like women from other parts of Africa and the world have broken through the “glass ceiling” as Parker (1996: 189) poignantly explains to get careers and now for the Bemba women, they have to climb and break through another concrete wall to transform a teaching that is essential to their lives. The

²¹⁹ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

current imbusa teaching that has incorporated other cultures and radically changed it can also incorporate aspects that can be essential for social transformation of women's experiences. The fact that *imbusa* can incorporate other cultures and practices is a positive sign for change. Further, participants blamed the teachers who are *banacimbusa* for their failure to reform the *imbusa* curriculum and develop more contemporary methods of teaching that are gender sensitive. For instance, Esther Musama (2014) is appalled at the type of woman who teaches/instructs young brides:

'...just look at the people they'll hire to teach!!! When I was going through the teachings, we had to look for these very elderly women...These are typical uneducated women that have lived all their lives serving in marriage, some of them being enslaved, so what can they do? What will they teach you differently from a life they have lived themselves?'

According to Esther Musama (2014),²²⁰ *banacimbusa* and other married women invited into the *imbusa* teaching space bring their experiences and give these experiences to a young bride as normative. I similarly affirmed that elsewhere (Kaunda 2013). This demonstrates that *amafunde yambusa* are experiential teachings because *banacimbusa*'s and other married women's experiences are shared as a teaching.

The (tutors) *banacimbusa* even get to have a refresher course as they teach, this means that *banacimbusa* teach the young brides how to take care of their marriages in ways that they (*banacimbusa*) have been doing even though they may know that those ways have not been beneficial to their wellbeing. Freire (1993: 35) demonstrates that learners and teachers need to draw from each other the knowledge for the equipping of both. This shows that it is not only students who learn in a classroom, but that teachers learn as well. Moreover, as women's exclusive space, women share experiences of their marriage after undergoing the *imbusa* course, and young brides may share some of their experiences and also seek clarity on certain aspects of the teaching. The implication of this is that *imbusa* as a dialogical teaching has potential to bring awareness to *banacimbusa* of the concerns that young brides may have thereby initiating change of the teaching. That is why the proposed curriculum in this chapter is to be taught by progressive *banacimbusa* who have knowledge of current debates on gender issues. In fact, Pengo Ng'andu (2014)²²¹ complained that the *banacimbusa* report to

²²⁰ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

²²¹ Pengo Ng'andu (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

the groom what the bride has been taught rather than teach him how he should take care of his bride too. She argues:

'there was a time that they paired my husband and I; I thought they would teach him about me but no, they reported to him that this is what we taught her. So it was more like I wanted the marriage to work so I kept on doing everything that was said in there.'

Naphtali Nkole (2014) in a similar response explained:

'My mom requested that my hubby's family should find someone to sit and teach him, but he was never taught. Later on, I actually discovered that he just told his family that he wasn't interested in being taught and that's it. Even the premarital teaching from the church he only managed one session because he was busy travelling on work projects so couldn't manage to be in those teachings again. It was me alone who went through those.'

While the parents of the bride are responsible for seeking *banacimbusa* for their daughter, it is for the groom's pleasure that they do. According to these responses, a man can simply say 'no' and that no' is taken seriously. A woman on the other hand does not even have a right to say 'no' to the teaching. It is understandable because as a matrilineal ethnic group, descent is through a Bemba woman and culture is transmitted via a woman. This is more so a reason for the transformation of the *imbusa* rite curriculum.

While in precolonial Zambia, Bemba men were not taught, the *imbusa* teachings of precolonial times were not teaching subservience as it is taught currently. Current *imbusa* teachings have integrated much of the patriarchal cultural aspects. Due to this gravitation toward the patriarchal aspects of borrowed cultures, participants lamented the fact that men are never taught at the same level as women are taught. Both women and men or wives and husbands move and operate between their homes and workplaces, hence both needs the teaching as they work at a partnership level. For the work to be shared successfully for the Bemba, I argue that men need equipping in the same way that women are equipped in preparation for marriage. A woman would be taught from weeks to months, and a man is given a report of what she was taught in one to two hours. In this vein, Esther Musama (2014)²²² poignantly argues:

²²² Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

‘...if I am going to take a month or two being taught on how to take care of a man then definitely I expect him to be trained on how to take care of me. So actually, you find that we have a society that is so biased it’s concerned with taking care of a man more than a woman.’

For the participants in this study, a 21st century *nacimbusa* must be well versed in current trends of gender debates in order to teach gender balance in marriage. In other words, *banacimbusa* need to be women who are able to integrate insights from contemporary gender debates and into traditional culture and religion in order to equip Bemba career women for equality in marriage and the workplace. There is a need to have *banacimbusa* who have experience in both private (home/domestic) and public (work) space as Nancy Chomba (2014)²²³ argues:

‘because of modernization and the rising of women into these positions, women getting educated and going higher in their level of education, I think they [banacimbusa] should incorporate working women as well, to look at a career woman to teach her how she can balance between work and home and not concentrate so much on the marriage part only.’

It seems true that women who understand modern career women’s struggles in the domain of the workplace can teach such women better on how to handle these two institutions. Songs such as *Nalelala pakatanda wekanena lelo wandubula*²²⁴, translated as ‘I used to sleep on a reed mat; today my vagina has liberated me’. These are some of the songs that need to be re-interpreted or obliterated altogether because in the context of career women who are the focus of this study, they are economically able to stand on their own without a man. In fact, some participants like June Sampa (2014), in a discussion after the interview, shared information on a certain woman who helped her husband with *lobola* payments! Sometimes it is women who are breadwinners in their homes because their spouses may have been laid off at work. In these kinds of situations, one can argue that the reverse of the song is also true; where a man is the one in fact in need of redemption by his wife – the phallus has liberated him. The quote from Esther Musama (2014)²²⁵ below elaborates her point further:

²²³ Nancy Chomba (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

²²⁴ See Kaunda 2011: 24 and Rasing 2001: 285

²²⁵ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

‘...There are times that a woman would stay in a marriage not because there is love but maybe because of financial security. And so what happens if that person (woman) gets empowered and they don’t need that? You know there are all those things that have to be incorporated [in *amafunde yambusa*].’ (Esther Musama 2014).

Alidou (2005: 42) has similarly argued that for Muslim women in Niger, since there has been a high rate of divorce, and men are unable to provide economically for their families due to unemployment, polygamy, alcoholism, absenteeism etc., women have realised that they are the ones who can provide for their families. In fact, these Muslim women have taken a step further in teaching their daughters to value education so that they can enjoy a better future. In the comment above, Esther Musama (2014) demonstrates the questions that Bemba women have been grappling with concerning *imbusa* as it is currently being taught and the type of *banacimbusa* who are teaching it. It should also be stated that participants do not want to do away with these teachings; they rather want to have these teachings revised to fit the contemporary context of Zambian society. There is a desire from Bemba career women in Zambia to learn beyond issues pertaining to the private sphere, but to include the public sphere so as to find a balance between the two spaces.

The participants in this study have expressed a desire to have progressive *banacimbusa* that can help them to balance between the workplace and the home because they (*banacimbusa*) would have had first-hand experience on how to handle both spheres. Alidou had earlier noted of Muslim women in Niger, that the denial of women’s education is actually “...double-standard, privileging men and undervaluing women’s education... both hypocritical and detrimental to a “modernist” vision of Islamic society that incorporates women as agents in nation building” (2005: 43). The lack of women’s empowerment teachings in *amafunde yambusa* is similarly detrimental to Bemba career married women because it means that there are no protocols to be followed in the home like policies that are applied in some workplaces. While in the workplace qualifications might put a woman in the position of leadership, in indigenous *imbusa*, qualifications seem to do the exact opposite; that is, a cultured Bemba career woman would have to kneel even to her male subordinates at home if they visit her husband. Pengo Ng’andu (2014)²²⁶ explained:

²²⁶ Pengo Ng’andu (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

Work is work and home is home...there are some of my juniors that are my husband's friends and so if they come in the name of 'my husband's friend' I'll kneel, I'll not say because they are my juniors at work let me go out there and just stand and serve them whatever it is that am serving them. So I separate work with home.'

Further, brides should be engaged in conversation with *banacimbusa* during the teaching, meaning that the teaching has to be intentionally dialogical. While *banacimbusa* are central to *amafunde yambusa*, so is the bride that is being taught; it is like in the university, students are as central to the university as the lecturers. If there were no brides to be trained, *banacimbusa* would have no reason to exist. Therefore, just as *banacimbusa*'s voice is important in the teaching space, the bride should be given an opportunity to ask, engage and dialogue with *banacimbusa* for the benefit of both because *banacimbusa* come to the teaching space as refresher course.

While the participants did not explicitly and overtly state that they would like to dialogue during *imbusa* teachings, they hinted at the desire by stating that they had questions that they would not ask while they were being taught. The implication is that *imbusa* space is not a dialogical teaching and learning space. Freire (1970: 18) explains, "Dialogue must require an ever-present curiosity about the object of knowledge. Thus, dialogue is never an end in itself but a means to develop a better comprehension about the object of knowledge." This suggests that a classroom has to be a dialogical space where both the teacher and the learner are free to discuss and critically engage each other on issues under discussion thereby learning one from the other. In so doing, there is better understanding of the subject of *imbusa* between both the teachers and the learners or students. In *imbusa*, one or two of the older women may ask the bride during or around break time whether the bride understands what she is being taught and what she thinks of the teachings. Nevertheless, the young bride may not be able to honestly reveal the truth for fear that it may be used against her. For instance, Esther Musama (2014)²²⁷ explains:

'when they are teaching me I will not be able to say don't teach me this and that but I'll be able to weigh what am taught and be able to see which one is applicable and what should I take or not.'

If the topic were opened up for dialogue, both *banacimbusa* and the bride would learn from each other; however, *banacimbusa* take the stance that the brides are empty vessels that need filling and

²²⁷ Esther Musama (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

they have nothing to share in return. Unintentionally and informally, this also sends a subliminal message for the brides to replicate in their homes; evident where they fail to question their spouses on many issues pertaining to their relationship and wellbeing in marriage. Kaunda and Reddy (2013: 125)²²⁸ have revealed that while Bemba women use the *imbusa* space to stand in solidarity, the space is still hierarchical and non-dialogical, as the young women who are the students or initiates are not given space to engage with the teachers (*banacimbusa*); rather they learn in silence and are to take every teaching seriously without questioning. If *imbusa* teachings are to be relevant in contemporary Zambia, opening up *amafunde yambusa* to dialogue between the brides, *banacimbusa* and men is necessary.

Freire (1993) has explained that just because one is a teacher does not mean that he/she knows more than the students. Moving from “banking education” to “problem posing” (dialogical) approaches as Freire (1970: 75) advocates in *amafunde yambusa* implies a deliberate movement from *banacimbusa* as knower to learning together with the bride/s, for gender justice and equality in marriage and place of work for both women and men, as I argued elsewhere (Kaunda, 2013: 59). The method that is currently used in *imbusa* teachings is similar to the banking method that Freire (1970) critiques. According to Freire (1970: 75) this kind of “Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor.”

Research on *amafunde yambusa* cannot be complete without one discussing sex and sexuality teachings; this is one aspect that dominates the teaching. Mapala (2004) explains that when women have received this teaching they are able to give a man immense sexual pleasure. The struggle is that most of these women are not given negotiating skills with their husbands and this endangers them especially in the context of HIV.

9.2.2. Toward a Feminist Teaching of Imbusa

To effectively equip women for married life, men also need awareness of how to balance their relationship and activities in their homes and at their work place. The implication is that a couple can

²²⁸ See also Mushibwe (2009).

be taught on certain aspects of *imbusa* together. If a young bride is told in the presence of a spouse that there are facilities and spaces where she can take her grievances if her spouse is abusing her, both the man and woman would know that they are both empowered in that regard. Teaching the bride alone is just giving her head knowledge that may not help her because she has too much information that her spouse does not have. If, for example, a woman obtains academic education and is made aware of patriarchy, she has acquired head knowledge that may not help her in her home because her husband is not conscientised in the same way that she has been conscientised. Her spouse may still abuse her because he has not been equipped with the tools and skills that a Bemba woman has received in *imbusa*. In conversation with a female clergy friend, she said to me, “*my husband tells me that I may be a priest at Church but in this house, he’s the priest and so I have to follow his leadership!*” There has to be deliberate involvement of men in the *imbusa* teachings where men learn together with women about gender justice issues, for instance. The tendency has been that men overtake spaces when they are invited, however, if Bemba career women would be equipped, Bemba men need to be conscientised in the same way on certain aspects as well.

The proposed 21st century curriculum for Bemba career women also proposes a deliberate conscientising of women and men about gender justice, not only in the workplace but in the home as well. However, as the participants explained during fieldwork, there are protocols to follow in the workplace while there is none in marriage; which means that when a woman or even a man is abused in the home, the only place they can go is to *banacimbusa*, sometimes after the abuse has gone on a long time. Even if a woman has a better job and earns a higher salary than her spouse, at home she has to “take off that coat” and take up being a “wife”, as was argued in chapter five. This means that there is indeed a divide for women between the work place and home (private and public); the home is very traditional while the work place operates in the Western modern way. Women seem to be operating between “two worlds”, the indigenous home and the modern workspace. In fact, even men operate in the same two worlds except when men get home from work they do not necessarily have to “take off the coat” of a career man; they even become bosses in the home and probably take out their work frustrations on their spouses. Are there tools in *imbusa* that can be reclaimed to promote equal rights in marriage as in public sphere? How can gender justice be promoted in marriage? Pamela Kabwe (2014) showed an example that took place at her place of work, saying:

'our principal has retired but I heard a male colleague say that for this school to run effectively it's better to have a male head rather than a female. That already is undermining a woman; a woman is being displaced because they think that there is nothing that we can do, the man should be the head even at work. What we need to do is bring it to their attention that what a man can do even a woman can do.'

Banacimbusa have failed to strike a balance in this aspect as well, because indeed the teaching is still stuck in the past. Writing about women and men physicians in Sweden, Helena Falkenberg *et al* (2015: 69) argues, "Gender has been concluded to influence the decisive choices women and men make throughout their careers, from training to practice". For the Bemba women in the workplace, decision-making is influenced by whether the woman is married and has undergone *imbusa*. Another clear illustration of where *imbusa* has failed to translate the old teaching to contemporary trends in Zambian society is where a woman is taught to have a vegetable garden in her yard. Patricia Kabwe (2014) articulates it well, asserting that:

'...the only downside of it (imbusa) is that they don't teach you empowerment in the work place, for example, but how to please your husband. They teach you garden but not how to survive as an independent woman. I have a very supportive partner and we encourage one another, he doesn't believe that as a woman I should be a housewife, which works well for me; as much as he needs to grow in his career, so do I.'

This is one aspect that *banacimbusa* need to translate into career. In the precolonial era, a Bemba woman was working and her career was in the gardens; however, presently, women are in corporate employment and that is what needs to be encouraged. It is not a problem that a couple should have a vegetable garden in their yard, what is problematic is not being able to emphasise a woman's need for employment in the public space in order to care for herself and her family.

It is necessary that the *imbusa* teaching take into account gender issues that are being taken seriously in the country. Esther Musama (2014) wondered why women activists have not taken up *imbusa* space for gender sensitization. She states:

'... not everything in imbusa is bad; there are things that are beneficial, but I think what we need is to make modern education and imbusa compatible. We know that modern education leaves a family gap but again we know that imbusa alone leaves a gap on the empowerment part; if we can have both we would be better people. Maybe if we can have people sit and analyse what it is that can be taken on board and what is it that needs be done away with. I don't know why the women's groups haven't taken up this seriously, 'cause if you are to advocate for women rights and everything, I think it starts from there. It starts from what a woman is being

taught, because if you do something otherwise, your husband will say “didn’t they tell you that this is supposed to be done like this?” So I think that even our women’s rights activists should look into that. Let’s review what is it that we feel as women, that this is suppressive, let’s get it out. I mean we don’t want our children carrying with them this crazy stuff. To strike a balance we need to grab the good from imbusa and the good from education (academic/modern) as well.’

Esther Musama (2014) is asserting that *amafunde yambusa* is a safe space for engaging experts on gender equality in the country. In short, there must be a deliberate focus on the rights of women – e.g. gender justice and equality, sexual and reproductive rights – and dialogical discussion with the brides and grooms within this space. *Banacimbusa* and other women and men who are passionate about gender justice and equality can come together to teach and conscientise couples concerning gender issues in marriage and the workplace. In fact, women and men who are activists and well informed in liberatory and gender-sensitive methodological approaches to education need to be intentionally invited, like guest lecturers, to the *imbusa* space. The proposed *imbusa* curriculum suggests a more workshop approach rather than banking approach with an individual bride or even a collective of brides. The media that is used in educating students or initiates in this case, influence the “lens of reality” that students adopt after the lessons as argued by Michelle Sager (2013: 10). *Imbusa* space uses a variety of medium to communicate to the brides, some media are intentional and other media is unintentional such as biases that *banacimbusa* pass on unknowingly. This is similar to Sager’s (2013: 10) observation that “The education system reproduces cultural norms. As a teacher, I am always struggling with this - what are *my* biases and assumptions that I pass along? Without critical reflection for teachers, these assumptions will continue to be taught unintentionally to our students.” In the workshop approach of teaching *imbusa*, with dialogical and problem-solving approaches, three or four prospective brides can be engaged together to bring out different understandings, views and perspectives on marriage. When women come together to learn and teach and equip one another concerning marriage, it is of importance to listen to each other’s voices. In a community of practice such as an *imbusa* space, Subverting the banking form of education as Freire (1993) demonstrates, means moving away from the norm, for *banacimbusa* like formal educators it means intentionally engaging with their students/brides in order to teach and learn from and with each other. Jonathan Friedman (1992: 839) shares that “one belongs to a group because one is a bearer of a substance common to other members, irrespective of how one lives.” Bemba married women belong to the community of married women because of the shared *imbusa* experience and

they live by the guidelines of the *imbusa* teachings.

Issues of gender-based violence cannot be overemphasised and *banacimbusa* need to deal with these subjects in their curriculum. Participant Esther Musama (2014) explained:

‘Someone would be in this abusive marriage, punched like a punching bag until they die, but because they were taught never to say, they’ll just die with it which I think is unacceptable if you ask me. If something is wrong and needs other peoples’ attention definitely it has to be dealt with, there are certain things that women need to open up. I remember a case of a friend, she was being beaten and we didn’t know, but of course you would be suspicious because here is a friend you see her today the eye is swollen... you wonder is everything ok? But she would defend her husband. Finally, she was hammered beyond normal, ended up with internal injuries. When she went to the hospital the doctors asked what happened; she said “nothing am just not well” but she was bleeding inside, until she was about to die. That’s when she told the mother that she was beaten by her husband and she died. Why should teachings cost me my life?’

Esther Musama (2014) raises a very appropriate question here: why indeed should teachings cost anyone their life? These are aspects of the teaching that women and men have to engage with in *amafunde yambusa* in order to equip both. It is critical for married women to know their rights in marriage just as they do at work where they can report matters in cases of violence in the home. The bedroom is a very important aspect in *imbusa* teachings and dominates the entire teaching. In fact, there are many rituals that go on in a Bemba couple’s bedroom and that is why *banacimbusa* take time in their teaching on this subject. As Tamale (2005: 17) has explained of Baganda women, the “*Ssenga* also made it clear that a wife did not have to tolerate an abusive spouse; that she had the right to” divorce him for being abusive.

Another example relates to the basin, *akanweno*, that a woman was presented for the purification ritual (Richards, 1982 and Rasing, 2001). Delfister Ngosa (2014) explained that “*The very utensils that they’ll use on that girl will be kept until her wedding day*”. In contemporary Zambia, these utensils still include *akanweno* (basin), and a couple must have this in their bedroom for cleaning up after intercourse and during spousal shaving. *Akanweno* is also used for ritual cleansing after one of the spouses confesses to infidelity. In contemporary societies, not only in Zambia, when one discovers that her or his spouse has been having an extramarital affair, the “ritual” that is performed by the couple is an HIV test. Whether the couple performs the ritual purification, they would still need that other “ritual” of testing for HIV. A number of career women who participated in this study argued

that some of the teachings do not make much sense and need revising. In this line, one of the participants, Sandy Matipa (2014), contended that

‘...for instance the teachings of having a dish or bowl/basin under the bed, where are you going to put those dishes? When you look at the kinds of beds that we have, people have self-contained bedrooms now, so you don’t need that.’

This is one of various areas in which *banacimbusa* fails to seriously consider context where hair remover creams can be incorporated into the teaching instead of rigidly enforcing the use of a basin for instance. *Banacimbusa* still teach the same way women were taught in precolonial Zambia. Sandy Matipa’s (2014)²²⁹ re-interpretation of such teaching is vital for a married career woman. The career women who participated in this study, therefore, are right in seeking for re-interpretation of some aspects of *imbusa* teachings.

As was noted before, sex takes up the most space in the *imbusa* curriculum. A bride undergoing *amafunde yambusa* is presumed to be a virgin and therefore, *banacimbusa* take time to explain romance, intimacy and the sexual act to the bride. This is also done visually with a cocooned insect known as *nacisungu* or *nakantebele* (virginity insect) in Bemba. This *nacisungu* insect is symbolic of a man’s penis. The bride is taught that she has to be gentle with that part of her husband’s body as it is fragile and can cause her spouse much pain if not handled gently, especially when cleaning after intercourse or during spousal shaving. *Banacimbusa* try to gently squeeze the insect out of the cocoon and sometimes it gets hurt and dies. This is interpreted to the bride that if she is not careful and gentle when handling her husband’s genitals, she can hurt him or that when she has sexual intercourse with her husband for the very first time, she will bleed but that should not scare her. The large part of this erotic teaching takes the form of sexual dance. *Banacimbusa* and other women teach the brides to wriggle their waists in various sexual positions in order to empower the young bride with sexual agency. This is a space where Bemba women freely express their sexual agency, how to pleasure their husbands, and find enjoyment as they take charge of the intercourse. Sexuality among Bemba women is freely spoken about in *imbusa* space.

²²⁹ Sandy Matipa (2014), interviewed by Mutale Kaunda in Chingola (October).

Secondly, Bemba women are taught the art and ritual of spousal shaving. This also needs a basin/dish because of its practicability; however, for contemporary households that have self-contained (ensuite) bedrooms, these basins/dishes become irrelevant. Spousal pubic hair shaving is a form of foreplay and romance for the Bemba people. The bride is taught how to shave her husband, she then teaches him how to shave her, and this means that the couple has to shave each other for life. However, they can shave separately on arrangement. When a spouse is found to have shaved him/herself without prior arrangement and agreement, it is a red flag signalling possible infidelity (Mwenda 2008: 3). In fact, one of the participants explained that she was taught that she should know her spouse's genitals very well; *“they (banacimbusa) taught me that if he were to die in a car crash and only his penis remained, I would still identify it as his”*. Spousal shaving is central to Bemba marriage, however, for the contemporary career women, there is a need for re-interpretation of this ritual. Sometimes couples work in different cities; this means that one spouse may stay in another city for up to probably three months. In an informal conversation during fieldwork, I introduced my research to two women, one a high school teacher, the other a lawyer. I asked if they would be willing to take part in my research and the discussion led to spousal pubic hair shaving. The teacher argued, the couple needs to shave each other even if they live apart – they should only come and shave when they returned home to their spouse. The lawyer asked this teacher, *“When you were working in another province, did you wait three months to come and be shaved by your husband?”* The teacher did not hesitate in agreeing, and she pointed out *“these are our traditions and should be kept”*. Listening and participating in this conversation, I realised that some career women are not much bothered by the way *imbusa* is taught. To them, *“these are our traditions and should be followed”*, while others are not satisfied – they want transformation of the teaching to fit the contemporary Zambian society. With this kind of mentality concerning *“our traditions”*, women have been taught not to question their husbands even if they knew that he was having extra marital affairs, and they unreservedly welcome a spouse sexually as was established in my Master's research (Kaunda, 2013: 43).

Thirdly, sex and sexuality in *imbusa* includes procreation. Often when a couple has not conceived among the Bemba people (like in most African societies), it is often a woman who is seen to be at fault. Pengo Ng'andu revealed:

'There are those beads that we use for family planning. You find that the husband should even be able to remind the wife to move the beads on the strings... some of those beads are red, then there is a different kind of brown a deeper brown, and if both have been educated to say if the ring is on the red, it means that your wife is having her menses, then if it's on the lighter, then she is fertile, are you telling me that they'll (husbands) start pinpointing that how come you are not getting pregnant? And putting the blame on the wife; it will be like the man would question differently.'

In Pengo Ng'andu's (2014) re-interpretation of the bead hanging ritual, she shows that even if some *banacimbusa* want to stick to the old teaching on how to communicate in the marriage, they can still give a contemporary interpretation. It is true that when a couple has been unable to conceive, it is seen as a woman's fault. Pengo Ng'andu (2014) is enlightening from a medical/health worker's perspective that even with hanging the menstrual beads, *banacimbusa* can learn and teach these principles. For this kind of interpretation to be reached, *banacimbusa* need conscientising from trained medical personnel. It is in this teaching, both bride and groom would be taught to seek medical help together as a couple in case they are unable to conceive or have any other health needs. The way sex and sexuality is taught in *amafunde yambusa* has a direct bearing on the kind of masculinities and femininities that are formed in couples' homes.

9.2.3. Masculinities and Femininities in Imbusa Teachings

In *imbusa* teachings, there are lessons that are intentionally or unintentionally passed on to the brides/students/initiates that are replicated in their homes. As argued above, *banacimbusa* are central to the teaching of *imbusa*, however, if there would be a possibility of introducing alternative femininities and masculinities to the *imbusa* space, dialogue must happen between *banacimbusa*, women (brides) and men (grooms) about gender in the changed Zambian society. The argument is based on the preceding chapters (five and six) where the participants observe that the *imbusa* teaching lacks women empowerment as well as teaching for men on how to take care of a woman. This means that the previous *imbusa* curriculum taught a certain type of masculinity and femininity intentionally or unintentionally. What is expected of a man in marriage? Alternatively, as Esther Musama (2014) rightly asked, "*who takes care of a woman?*" What type of femininity and masculinity does this current curriculum propose? One of the participants, Nancy Chomba (2014), lamented that because she works in another province from her husband, some people have told her that

... 'your husband is just weak that's why he fails to tell you to stop work'. Some think I am not serious, and being a pastor's wife it has really been hard because you are not with your partner all the time and I have duties at church that I can't attend to often. There has been discrimination even from my in-laws; they want their son to be with his wife, but again you are away and all that so it's been hard. What made it easy is that we have both agreed on that; with him, he says "you went to school and I want to see you as an independent woman and I just can't stop you from what you'll do all your life what you really enjoy doing, and again I wouldn't want to see you to just sit at home, I want you to progress into this field".

From this response, one gets the idea that a certain type of masculinity is advocated, which is that a man is the head of the home and everything that the head of the home says is the final word. The implication of this is that if a husband does not want his wife to have a career, she cannot question him rather she should just obey him and resign from her job. In the current *imbusa* curriculum as it is taught, there is no space for engaging with men on various issues. African women theologians have argued, for instance, that heterosexual marriage is dangerous for African women because that is where most women are infected with HIV.²³⁰ What kind of masculinity and femininity should therefore, be taught in progressive *imbusa* in order to empower women to be able to say no to sex when they suspect their spouse of infidelity? Similarly, two participants who are teachers explained:

'if you look at the marriages in the past, they took the husband to be like God; even now we are taught that you should be kneeling when giving him anything, when he comes home from work you take shoes off his feet and put them away, difficult things that make you seem like a slave in that marriage.' (Betty Nonde 2014).

Kalenga Mwamba also stated, *"we don't have any new knowledge, that's why we are still using the old one even if we are in the 21st century"*.

Intercultural perspectives on marriage also need to be taken into consideration in a pluralistic Zambian society because Bemba men and women are not only marrying Bembas; there are now intercultural marriages within Zambia and outside of Zambia.

²³⁰ See for instance Phiri and Nadar (2009) and Oduyoye (2001).

9.3. Towards a Bemba Married Career Women's Contemporary *Imbusa* Curriculum

From the sections above, it is clear that Bemba career women would like *amafunde yambusa* to continue. However, there are aspects of the teaching that need reviewing for it to fit the contemporary Bemba career woman. Chapter five presented the traditional *imbusa* curriculum. This does not mean that the curriculum is institutionalised or canonised; it is an oral teaching that has never been canonized except for what is written down by Richards and Rasing, and my sources are anthropologists who have written on the teaching. Below is a proposed curriculum that includes some of the aspects that Bemba career women would benefit from in order to be at the level where women would be prepared not just for marriage but careers as well. Bemba *imbusa* is also about women as a collective teaching and sharing their lived social and marriage experiences as they teach young brides. In fact, Kapwepwe (1994) equates the teaching of *amafunde yambusa* with Western education when he calls it a school. Since the *imbusa* teaching space is a school and every school has a syllabus or curriculum that is followed. *Imbusa* teachings therefore, become the curriculum that is followed in the delivery of *amafunde*.

As in formal academic education, *imbusa* also has a hidden curriculum where the *banacimbusa* teachers transmit skills to the brides or students unknowingly. A hidden curriculum according to Merfat Alsubaie (2015: 125) “refers to the unspoken or implicit values, behaviors, procedures, and norms that exist in the educational setting.” These are expressions that may or may not be verbal that tend to enforce certain behaviors, standards and social beliefs in a learning space such as *imbusa* teaching and learning space. A hidden curriculum is also taught and passed on to the brides whether intentionally or not. Alsubaie (2015: 127) has also noted that teachers “impact their students’ behaviors, beliefs, experiences, skills, and knowledge through their hidden curriculum” and as a result students learn from both the intentional and unintentional ways the teaching is passed on to them. Arnfred Signe and Akosua Ampofo (2010: 8) argue that in Africa

The old lady’s wisdom is received without question and the community can relax in the assurance that she will know what to do. No one requires that she produce ‘empirical evidence’ for her perspectives. Her perspectives are respected and

validated because they have been built over a lifetime of experience, including the spiritual insight that comes with being an abrewa.

Banacimbusa similarly are old women who have experienced *imbusa* in their homes over long periods and therefore, their students take the teaching trustingly. The fact that *banacimbusa* have had experience in marriage after having undergone these teachings should be reason enough for them to look forward to the transformation of some aspects of *imbusa*. Arnfred and Ampofo (2010: 10) further explained that women's knowing is often connected to their experiences.

9.3.1. Proposed Course Outline²³¹

This *imbusa* teaching will introduce the initiates/brides to teachings that will equip them for their homes and places of work. An on-going course starts as soon as there is a bride or brides in need of the lessons. Traditionally, a bride is taught alone, however this course will teach up to four or five brides/couples at a time in order to have a variety of views since it will also be a dialogical and problem-solving teaching space drawing on Freire's (1993) teaching and learning philosophies. An additional component to this proposed contemporary *imbusa* teaching will be to explore how men would be taught, as women are, in order to learn their responsibility in marriage. The aim of bringing men into the previously women-only teaching space is to bring balance to the teaching, so that while women are taught to take care of their marriages, their careers are also talked about; and men are taught the same principles on how to take care of their marriage and careers. As a result, this course will be coordinated by *nacimbusa* (facilitator and marriage mentor) and will be co-facilitated by two other *ifimbusa* (teachers) as well as three other recently married women. The course will offer two²³² types of premarital counseling: a Christianised version and the raw traditional *imbusa*

²³¹ This course outline has been adapted from Sarojini Nadar's 2007 Biblical Hermeneutics course found at http://utlo.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/Nadar/APPENDIX_D2_gender_hermeneutics_course_outline_120711.sflb.ashx

²³² There are some *imbusa* teachings that are Christian because as Delfister Ngosa (October 2014) a participant in this study explained Pentecostal Christians have reformulated the *imbusa* to fit in with the Christian views of marriage by removing from the teachings what they consider “*outdated, purely demonic and focusing on tradition that aligns with the word of God*”. Haynes (2013) has also pointed out that Christian *banacimbusa* are more open about sexuality issues than those Richards had researched on earlier.

teaching. It would be up to the bride to choose which type of the teaching she would like to go through.

9.3.2. Course Format

This teaching will be facilitated either primarily in the bride's bedroom or at *nacimbusa's* home.²³³ discussions between the *nacimbusa*, the bride/s, the groom/s and other facilitators as continuous learning and teaching over a period of one month. The lessons will be taught three days a week because the bride and groom are both working, and to accommodate the other facilitators as well. The teaching will be conducted for three hours in the evenings during weekdays or during the daytime on weekends; the bride, groom and facilitators would agree on conducive days for everyone.

This is a radical teaching that would require the bride and groom as well as the facilitator to critically engage issues pertaining to women and men in marriage and career. Therefore, the teaching may require some readings on current gender debates on certain topics of the curriculum. *Nacimbusa* will facilitate the teachings and she will have to be a career woman but also well versed in traditional *imbusa*. The *nacimbusa* would be required to invite individuals with expertise in crucial areas such as women's sexuality and reproductive health and gender equality.

9.3.3. Description

The teaching will start by introducing students (that is the bride and groom) to the current gender debates. The couple will be introduced to existing structures they can approach in case they are unable to conceive; they should try relevant health care facilities, for example. *Nacimbusa* will welcome parents of both the bride and groom to attend some aspects of the teaching especially the introduction so that they are conversant with what the bride and groom will be equipped with. The teaching will focus on assisting the couple to understand their relationship in terms of gender justice.

²³³ In precolonial times they built a hut specifically for these teachings in order to be far away from the community and focus on the teachings with undivided attention as Richards (1982) demonstrated.

9.3.4. Course Outcomes

At the end of this teaching, the couple/students should demonstrate:

- How they are going to assist and encourage each other in career advancement as a couple.
- Mastery of the *infunkutu* bed dance skills.
- The skill to apply critical thinking to situations in their relationship as a married couple together.
- Ability to translate traditional aspects of *imbusa* to be up-to-date with current happenings in society for the purpose of social transformation.

9.3.5. Overview of *Amafunde Yambusa*

The groom/s would not attend all the teachings, in order to give women, the opportunity to establish solidarity and empower each other in aspects that needs to be only as a group of women – such as the demonstration of the erotic. Bemba women thoroughly teach this aspect to a young bride. Because of the way this aspect of *imbusa* is taught, it is necessary for the men and groom/s to have their own separate sessions on this particular aspect of *imbusa* teaching. It must be noted that although there is open speech concerning sex in this space, there is apparently no inclusivity of sexual minorities as I have explained earlier.

Day	Topic	Facilitators	Assignments
#1	Introduction to the facilitators and expectations for the teachings	Traditional <i>banacimbusa</i> and gender activists	No Assignment
#2	Synopsis of <i>imbusa</i> as was taught according to the previous curriculum	Traditional <i>banacimbusa</i>	No Assignment
#3	Married woman, agency and her home	Gender activists and <i>banacimbusa</i>	Talk with a couple – that they are free to ask questions – and find out how this couple has been able to live together then report to <i>banacimbusa</i> .

#4	Married woman, agency and career	<i>Banacimbusa</i> and gender activists	Find out from two different couples (one from the church and the other traditional) how they resolve problems in the home and whether they know about facilities that can assist in terms of domestic disputes that get out of control.
#5	Pottery symbols in <i>imbusa</i> molded by <i>nacimbusa</i>	<i>Banacimbusa</i>	
#6	Sex in marriage	<i>Banacimbusa</i> , gender activists	Continue to learn the sexual dance taught in this session
#7	Presentation of sexual positions and dances by the couple	<i>Banacimbusa</i>	Continue learning the sexual dance and positions
#8	The role of families and in-laws in the couple's lives	<i>Banacimbusa</i> and gender activists	Continue learning sex positions and waist wriggling and twerking
#9	Consultations and questions from couple/s	<i>Banacimbusa</i> and gender activists	
#10	Gender based violence	<i>Banacimbusa</i> , gender activists	The couple visit women's shelters and talk to some of the women who have experienced violence at the hands of a spouse
#11	Gender justice in marriage	<i>Banacimbusa</i> and gender activists	
#12	Report on findings of violence at the hands of an intimate lover	<i>Banacimbusa</i> , gender activists	
#13	Family planning and conception in marriage		
#14	In case of barrenness in marriage	Health/medical personnel, <i>Banacimbusa</i> , gender activists	Visit a health care facility and discuss with medical personnel on issues of infertility in both women and men
#15	Intimacy, romance and sex in marriage	Health/medical personnel, <i>Banacimbusa</i> , gender activists	
#16	Masculinity and femininity in the home and workplace	<i>Banacimbusa</i> , gender activists	

#17	Recap of all that has been taught/learnt	Health/medical personnel, <i>Banacimbusa</i> , gender activists	
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9.3.6. Course Expectations and Assessments

The following are the course expectations and assessments:

9.3.6.1. Attendance

Unlike the previous curriculum that requires only attendance, the current curriculum requires attendance and participation in this teaching. The couple will attend most of the sessions together and learn together on aspects that will be taught.

9.3.6.2. Assignments

Short assignment Number 1:

The couple/s will be asked to talk to two different couples that they are comfortable with and find out from them how they have lived out what they were taught as they entered into marriage – what has been beneficial to them as a couple and what have they found challenging? The two couples should consist of a recently married couple and a couple that has been married longer than ten years for instance.

Short assignment Number 2:

The couple will explore how career married women and men (two couples) have engaged with the issue of authority and headship in the home and work. They will find out from these two couples how and whether being a couple in professional employment has challenges, what are the benefits, and whether the benefits outweigh the challenges and vice versa. Their task will include finding out from two married couples how they resolve problems in the home and whether they know about facilities that can assist them in terms of domestic disputes that get out of control.

Short assignment Number 3:

Amafunde yambusa focuses much on the subject of sex in marriage; therefore, as was argued above, some of the aspects of the previous curriculum will be taken into account in this current curriculum. This means that the central subject in *imbusa*, “sex”, will remain central to the teaching. Hence, the couple will need to go and separately continue to learn the sexual moves taught in this session.

Final assignment

Completion of the above assignments is a requirement in order to successfully graduate from *amafunde yambusa*. The couple/s will be required to do a presentation of their learned bedroom skills, as in the previous curriculum. This is necessary because both bride/s and groom/s will be able to exhibit the learnt sexual skills rather than previously where only the bride was taught these skills. The groom/s would exhibit their skills to the *shibukombe* (male mediator between the family of the bride and groom, usually handpicked by the groom and his family to represent the groom in several discussions). The career women who participated in this study hinted at wanting the men to also be taught how to take care of a woman because at the foundation of this proposed curriculum is the desire to enable a couple to reflect and engage in *amafunde yambusa* at the same level of understanding. The couple will also engage with the facilitators and panel on how they will practice the teachings in their homes and places of work, bearing in mind issues of gender equality and justice.

The above course outline presents what a progressive *imbusa* teaching would look like for career women. Since culture is dynamic and not static, the progressive *imbusa* curriculum takes its cue from the dynamic nature of culture. *Imbusa* teachings require a transformation from the learned (from other cultures) norm and paradoxically include the more positive aspects of what is currently going on in the world. As a curriculum, everything that initiates of *imbusa* experience in that space are lessons that they have to follow and re-enact in their homes. This proposed curriculum values independent thinking of the students or initiates as well as their engagement of *imbusa* teachings. This is adapted from Freire’ (1993) and Bell Hooks’ (2000) demonstration of education that

liberates. As a curriculum, the proposition is that learners or students learn to face life in their homes and workplace in ways that are appropriate in the changing societies that they live in. This means that the students are to interpret meaning from what they are taught by critically understanding and interpreting the teachings received. The new curriculum proposes interaction between *banacimbusa* (teachers/mentors) and brides (students) as well as between student peers with the content of the proposed curriculum. In allowing active participation of brides (students), students become agents of their own learning process and give meaning to what they learn. Further, undergoing *imbusa* teachings using the proposed curriculum is to enable Bemba women “to live as responsible and dependable members of the society.” Michael Katola (2014: 31) explains as one of the outcomes of education, this is what *imbusa* has always been about. In connection with what participants’ in this study desire to continue with *imbusa* teachings, Katola (2014: 33) argues that “it is important to underscore the fact that while societies are dynamic and changes are inevitable, the core ideas and values of a culture should be zealously guarded and handed over from one generation to the other.”

9.4. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the implications of the analysis, and the way forward for *imbusa* teachings in contemporary Zambia in the Copperbelt province, for the empowerment of Bemba career women. To be relevant to a career Bemba woman, this chapter has proposed a curriculum that would best fit a contemporary career woman in the Zambian context. It must be noted that this curriculum is not exhaustive; rather it is an exploratory tool for change that career women long for on the Zambian Copperbelt. Because the participants in this study had expressed a desire for the *imbusa* teachings to continue with a reviewed curriculum, this chapter suggests that some of the traditional aspects remain part of the current proposed curriculum.

CHAPTER TEN

TRADITION AND MODERNITY MEET: TOWARDS A CONCLUSION?

Banacimbusa should encourage young brides to pursue careers or at least get involved in some form of income generating activity. This is because the economic times require us as spouses and mothers to help support our spouses' efforts. Apart from that, we have a lot of talent among the young brides that can bring a lot of benefit to the communities that they live in and that would help make the world a better place – Peni Chomba (2014).

10.0. Introduction

This chapter demonstrates how the objectives of this research have been met regarding Bemba married career women's experiences of *imbusa* in their homes and workplaces. The central research question was “*How do Bemba married career women engage with the traditional cultural curriculum of marriage (amafunde yambusa) in their daily lives at home and workplace?*” In order to respond to this question, the three objectives of the study were as follows. I discussed the resources in *imbusa* teachings that construct Bemba career women's agency. I explored how career married women learn, negotiate, and resist *amafunde yambusa* in their homes and at places of work and then analyzed why Bemba career married women negotiate, engage or resist *amafunde yambusa* in their homes and at places of work in the way that they do.

In addition, given the contested environment of the *imbusa* curriculum, I am aware that the thesis and conclusions offered here are likely to be challenged and disputed. Therefore, these findings are not exhaustive in and of themselves. The goal was not to attain unanimity in interpreting *imbusa* teaching. The goal was rather to clarify that some contesting lessons in *imbusa* by Bemba career married women need to be evaluated and reviewed in order to fit the contemporary and progressive Bemba career woman and their desire to climb the corporate ladder. This chapter has two sections: first, I demonstrated how this study has contributed to establishing new knowledge; and secondly, I showed the gaps and suggestions for further research.

10.1. Contribution to Establishing New Knowledge

This study on *imbusa* teachings focused on the lived experiences of Bemba married career women after going through *imbusa* initiation rite. The focus of the study has been how Bemba women live out what they are taught in marriage and at their workplaces. This is because much of the existing knowledge on this rite centers on the rite itself; the aspects of the rite are often presented and specifically focus on how the rite is carried out (Richards, 1982; Rasing, 2001; Haynes, 2012). Mushibwe (2009), on the other hand, has focused on the impact that these teachings have on women's education. In this section, I will however focus on the three explicit knowledge contributions that this study has demonstrated.

First, contextually, Western anthropologists such as Richards, Rasing, Turner, Haynes, Hinfelaar and others, have studied rites of passage. These anthropologists pioneered writings on *imbusa* and they often tended to focus on uneducated rural women. Those who researched on the phenomena on the Copperbelt Province such as Rasing and Haynes did not specifically focus on career women; rather they generally focused on women in the city or town in general. Women are expected to exhibit behaviour that demonstrates that they are taught or have undergone *imbusa* even in the workplace. Hence, Bemba women have been grappling with how to operate in these two spaces, in their homes and in their workplace.

Imbusa teachings are social constructions that do not remain static but can be dynamic and fit with the times as most if not all participants expressed. Bemba women have experienced subordination in their places of work in the name of culture. *Imbusa* has been used as a tool to deny them positions in their place of work and even in their homes, when they have been considered too ambitious for a woman. While the constitution of Zambia (2016: 9) has articulated the following, “(1) Women and men have the right to equal treatment and opportunities. (2) Women and men have an equal right to inherit, own, use, administer and control property.” In marriage however, the man (husband) has the final word on such issues, as demonstrated in chapter eight, by one of the participants Esnarth Ngandu. She lamented that her husband sees nothing wrong with having all their properties registered in his name. It is also true for instance that being in a “*remote controlled marriage*” as one of the participants Nancy Chomba (October 2014) called the situation of married couples living apart

in different provinces or towns due to work placements. Colleagues at work often told her that she behaves like she never went through *amafunde*, this suggest that a woman has to give up her job or career to fulfill her duties as a married woman. Further, as a researcher, I underwent *amafunde* eleven years ago and I carried out research as an insider, a Bemba taught woman. Western anthropologists and some Zambian men have often carried research out concerning *imbusa*. As a woman who has undergone the same teaching, carrying out research has given a context as I have intimate knowledge of *imbusa* teachings, which was beneficial.

Second, methodologically, the study has contributed to new knowledge in that Western anthropologists have usually utilized ethnography in researching the *imbusa* phenomena. I employed a feminist decolonial approach as a tool with which to view Bemba career women's experiences of *imbusa* in their places of work and in their homes. Being interviewed by one of their own instead of Western anthropologists is a contribution that this study has methodologically innovated. While some of these anthropologists were and are women as well, the critical difference has been that a woman who has also undergone the teachings they have gone through and is able to relate to much of their experience is vital. While power dynamics in terms of me, as a researcher, coming from relatively affluent (in terms of infrastructure) South Africa, the ability to share and produce data together with the participants was beneficial for this study and to us as researcher and participants. Using feminist interviewing, I did not position myself as the expert in the field of *imbusa*, the participants and I learnt together, there was an interdependent relationship through the process of research. For most of the participants, it was the first time they shared their concerns of how the *imbusa* teaching has not been helpful in terms of their careers. Had *imbusa* been a dialogical space both *banacimbusa* and the brides would have critically engaged some of these concerns during the teachings. Further, I asked questions that are at the cutting edge of the intersection of disciplines thereby making this an interdisciplinary research.

Third, theoretically the proposed progressive curriculum used two postcolonial feminist theories. Nego-feminism (Nnaemeka 2003) was drawn upon to critically analyse the lived experiences of Bemba married career women. Postcolonial feminist pedagogy was also used to explore how *imbusa* is both taught and received or learnt by Bemba women. Because *banacimbusa* are central to the

imbusa space, they need to be conscientised of issues relating to issues that career women face both in their homes and at workplaces so that they will have to teach in the *imbusa* space with knowledge of these women's experiences. These two theories as well as African feminist cultural hermeneutics (Kanyoro 2002) contributed to the difference in the way *imbusa* has been researched by other scholars. These theories assisted in arriving at the new progressive curriculum that would take into account debates on gender issues. Women in this study expressed the desire for the continuation of *imbusa* teachings; however, their responses also suggested that there is a need for the transformation of the content in the *imbusa* teachings. This aligns with Nnaemeka's (2003) nego-feminism, which advocates for using the same cultural concepts to find liberation for women. Further, the progressive curriculum is a contribution in that while other researchers of *imbusa/icisungu* refer to the rite as teachings, they have not conceptualised it as a curriculum.

This study was significant as it dealt with everyday life experiences of Bemba and Zambian women's lives. Conversations about women in Zambia often end up with the *imbusa* topic and therefore, this is a critical and central aspect of Bemba and Zambian life.

10.2. Gaps and Suggestions for Further Research

This study as mentioned earlier is not exhaustive and final; conducting this research however, led to further questions and gaps that need to be investigated and explored further.

First, can *imbusa* space accommodate sexual minority²³⁴ issues that have emerged? This interesting gap can be explored because *imbusa* has been a space that focuses on heterosexual marital teachings.

Second, Betty Nonde (2014), a participant in this study, had explained that:

In fact in a course, counseling and guidance, a bit of these teachings are incorporated. As guidance teachers, we were told to be frank with the children and "call a spade a spade" rather than in the past, we were just told: "don't sleep with a man; if you do your fingers will grow long". They weren't coming out but in modern education there is transparency rather than just using proverbs.'

²³⁴ LGBTIQ

It would be interesting to evaluate how schools are teaching this aspect in their counseling and guidance courses. The fact that schools have taken up the responsibility to teach high school students some aspects that are taught in *imbusa* is a step in the right direction; however, the question is how is it being taught? Is it just the females being taught and not the male students? Why is it being taught in the way it is being taught? This would be interesting research.

Third, it would also be interesting to have a comparative study on traditional *banacimbusa* and the Christian *banacimbusa* because the two groups have been pointing fingers at each other. The Christians oppose certain traditional teachings as outdated and demonic as Delfister Ngosa (2014) explained in an interview, stating, “...now that culture is changing there are three ways in which we can categorize it: one, there is tradition that is purely demonic, there is tradition that is outdated and tradition that aligns with the word of God”. Traditional *banacimbusa* also accuse the Christian *banacimbusa* of teaching diluted *amafunde* as Mulenga Mukupa (2014) succinctly states “We have to be careful not to dilute our traditions, that’s where the trouble comes in.” She would advise the young brides against the Christian teachings because she believes they are “*diluted*”.

10.3. Conclusion

This chapter critically demonstrated how this study has contributed to the body of knowledge contextually, methodologically and theoretically. Questions for further research were also highlighted in this chapter as well as the ambivalent contexts of the public/social spheres vis-à-vis the home private/private sphere. The former has protocols that can be followed when injustice has occurred in the workplace, while the latter does not have such procedures and protocols that can be followed in case of injustice happening in the home. Within the home, a woman or man is allowed to go back to *banacimbusa* when things are not going well; however, the response has usually been for the wife to go home and submit to her husband. If, however, the man goes to *banacimbusa* and complains about his wife, she is immediately called back into the teaching space and rebuked by her mentors. This response has unfortunately led to more abuse than helped stop it. This means that the public/social sphere operates more in the Western/modern way while the domestic/home/private

sphere operates in traditional cultural way. As in the words of Getman (2014: 192), Bemba women have “dual vocations that are sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting, but never entirely mutually exclusive.” Operating in the public and private sphere for Bemba women is imperative as they belong to both spaces. They cannot operate in one and leave out the other; hence, the proposed curriculum is seeking for a balance in the way teachings are delivered to the brides in order for them to find that balance between their homes and workplace.

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APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT'S INVITATION LETTER

Study Title: 'Negotiated Feminism? An Investigation of how Bemba Career Married Women Appropriate the *Imbusa* Pre-Marital Curriculum at Home and Workplace'

Researcher: Mutale Mulenga Kaunda (PhD Candidate)

Dear Participant:

I am inviting you to participate in my research, which focuses on exploring Bemba career women's agency in appropriating *imbusa* teachings in their everyday lives at home and workplace. My interest is mainly how you, as a career married Bemba woman, understand and negotiate *amafunde yambusa* between your work place and home. If you agree to take part in this study, I will ask you to participate in one interview to discuss Bemba career women's experiences in relation to these teachings. The Interview may last between one to two hours and I will use audio recording to help me analyse the findings from the interview. At your request, I will give you a copy of my interpretations of the interview for your corrections and/or clarity.

Be assured that I and my supervisor only will see the details of the interview. All tapes will be destroyed following the completion of the study. Information that could identify you, such as names and employment, etc. will be changed to give you anonymity and you are free to pull out from the interview process at any time with no penalty. My contact details for more information are:

Cell-phone number: +27836185514 **email address:** mutalemkaunda@gmail.com

Yours sincerely,



Mutale M- Kaunda

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Dear prospective participant:

As introduced in the invitation letter, I am Mutale M. Kaunda, candidate for Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in South Africa. My research topic is: *'Negotiated Feminism? An Investigation of how Bemba Career Married Women Appropriate the Imbusa Pre-Marital Curriculum at Home and Workplace'*

Having accepted to be interviewed, I would like you to officially consent that you were not coerced into taking part in this interview as well as to audio recording during the interviews. You may contact me with questions or concerns at any time before, during and after the study, and you are free to withdraw from the process at any time with no consequence.

Enclosed are two copies of the Consent Form, return to me a signed copy and keep the other for your records. There are very low risks associated with this study. It is hoped that you may gain insights and encouragement from this interview as well as deepen your understanding and knowledge of *amafunde yambusa*. Please note that recording the interview is to help me with the analysis of my findings.

For more information, you may contact:

Research Student: Mutale M- Kaunda

Pietermaritzburg 3201,

South Africa.

Mobile: +27836185514

E-mail: mutalemkaunda@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof Sarojini Nadar

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics,

University of KwaZulu-Natal,

Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3209,

Pietermaritzburg, KZN.

Email: nadars@ukzn.ac.za

Mobile: +27825707177

Research office: Ms P Ximba

Tel: +27031 260 3587

Agreement to participate:

The purpose of this study has been explained to me and I fully understand what is expected of my participation. I therefore agree to participate in this study.

☐ Yes

☐ No

(Please tick the correct one for you).

Participant's Name

Participant's Signature

Date

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANTS' AUDIO RECORDING CONSENT

I will use audio recording in order to keep record of what we will discuss during the interview. The recording is only for the interest of the study, as it will assist me to listen to our conversation after the interview in order to better understand what we will discuss. When I have written the information, the recording will be deleted so that no one else can listen to it, the written down information will be stored safely. During the interview, I will not record your name, you can choose a code name for yourself or I can give you one so that when someone reads what you said, they will not know your real name.

Do you agree that we can record the discussion?

Please sign here if you agree_____ Date_____

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (FIFTEEN BEMBA CAREER ZAMBIAN MARRIED WOMEN)

1. What is your name and age?
2. How long have you been working and married?
3. What field of work are you in?
4. Where you working from the time you were married? If no, how was the transition from home manager to working woman been for you?
5. What is your understanding and perception of *Imbusa* teachings?
6. As a career woman, what is your perception of women undergoing *imbusa* teachings should women still go through the teachings?
7. Do you take and use everything from the teachings or select what you think is beneficial to you?
8. How do you negotiate and engage the teachings at work where you may be a boss over men and at home?
9. In what ways do the teachings prepare women to pursue careers?
10. How have these teachings helped you find balance between your home and work place?
11. Does modern education pose a threat to these teachings or vice versa? Why or why not?
12. How do you think these teachings influence you as a woman to be a breadwinner of the family?
13. Were you taught by or do you know educated and career women who are also *banacimbusa*?
14. How does society perceive you being educated and married?
15. Would you encourage young brides to pursue careers? Why or why not?
16. How have you benefitted from being a married, career woman?
17. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences or ask me?