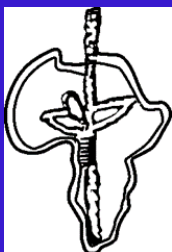


About the book

Cultural, religious and traditional influence around issues of marriage, sexualities and family dynamics have shaped practices, ceremonies and constructions of gendered roles in African societies. This book explores and addresses some of the achievements, contentious issues, and disparities inherent in these constructions through scholarly engagement by a select group of academics who engage relevant aspects in each chapter. A unique contribution of this book is its engagement that seeks to address gender disparity inherent in marriage and family dynamics from an African perspective and the rendering of recommendations for a way forward.

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Religion, Marriage, Sexualities, Culture and Family Dynamics - M E Baloyi, VMS Molobi & L Naicker

Religion, Marriage, Sexualities, Culture and Family Dynamics



Edited by:
Magezi Elijah Baloyi
Victor MS Molobi
Naicker Linda



**Religion, Marriage,
Sexualities, Culture and
Family dynamics**

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*Magezi Elijah Baloyi, Victor MS Molobi
and Naicker Linda.*



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Chapter 5

What if it's Culture? A Closer Look at the Gender Situation in Sepedi 'Manyalo' Songs

Napjadi Letsoalo

Abstract

The traditional trademark for Sepedi weddings is the 'manyalo' songs. For decades, the lyrics of manyalo songs have been crafted to serve a functional and educational purpose. This chapter aimed to explore if manyalo songs, as tools of empowerment, uphold gender equality. The newly gazetted Green Paper on marriages in South Africa envisages that all people in South Africa would conclude marriages in an equitable, non-discriminatory manner irrespective of their sexual orientations and cultural persuasions. Following qualitative discourse analysis, the chapter analysed data from the lyrics of 25 manyalo songs. The songs

were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected from the audios of the songs and transcribed. Examples of traditional gender order that the chapter identified as unequal and discriminatory were drawn from the lyrics, and generalisations were made based on literal and satirical interpretations. The analysis revealed patriarchal practices that do not reflect the values of equality, and the findings reflected gender hierarchy, heteronormativity, kinship norms and gender subversions. Therefore, the chapter contributes to the existing knowledge of gender order and adds to the understanding of the patriarchal constructions within Sepedi society.

Keywords

gender order, stereotype, lyrics, patriarchy, kinship, inequality, patriarchy, *manyalo* songs

Introduction

In Black communities, marriage was highly valued, and married people were accorded respect and enjoyed several social statuses. However, with the prevalence of gender oppression and discrimination, married women continue to be

confined to domestic spaces, and are oppressed by their men. Consequently, in 2021 the Minister of Home Affairs gazetted the Green Paper on marriages in South Africa that envisages that all people in the country irrespective of sexual orientations and cultural persuasions would conclude marriages that are in accord with the principles of equality and non-discrimination as encapsulated in the South African Constitution.¹¹⁷ Considering this, in the Sepedi¹¹⁸ culture, marriage has proven to be one of the fundamental aspects of couples, families and most importantly, the society. According to Mönnig¹¹⁹, marriage is not an affair that legalises the relationship between a man and a woman, but two groups of relatives. Therefore, marriage is the expansion and continuation of these families. Moreover, this union of two families is

¹¹⁷ Department of Home Affairs, Green Paper on Marriages, 2021.

¹¹⁸ The researcher is aware of the ongoing onomastic debate around Sepedi, Northern Sotho and Sesotho sa Leboa. This study, informed by Government Gazette 40733 of 31 March 2017 and Section 6 of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), takes the position to use Sepedi as an operational language.

¹¹⁹ Mönnig HO. *The Pedi* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1983).

sealed with either a traditional or contemporary wedding.

The traditional trademark for Sepedi weddings is wedding (*manyalo*) songs. “Songs constitute some of the richest treasures within African societies.”¹²⁰ In a traditional wedding, *manyalo* songs are played before, during and after the ceremony. There is also a radio programme called *Mekgolokwane* on *Thobela FM* (South African Sepedi public radio broadcaster) dedicated to wedding public announcements where these songs are played. These songs reflect and express culture, thus embodying a people’s total existence. Therefore, *manyalo* songs have a special significance in terms of Bapedi cultural values. For decades, the lyrics of *manyalo* songs have been carefully crafted to serve a functional and educational purpose. Composers assemble lyrics and sounds to create musical gestures that enact aspects of their inner musical and emotional experiences; music is an art of personal expression used to express and

¹²⁰ Zondi N. *Bahlabelelelani: Why Do They Sing? Gender and Power in Contemporary Women’s Songs* (Durban University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008), 1.

communicate the composer's experiences and ideas to listeners.¹²¹ This makes these songs expressions of beliefs, philosophy (worldview), religion, norms, mores, language, expressions, relationships and aspirations.¹²² Exposure to *manyalo* songs can lead to proper assessment, aesthetic appreciation and a clear understanding of the *Bapedi* emotional expression of marriage. The expression of marriage in *manyalo* songs reveals the gender order of the *Bapedi* society. The songs express expectations on both the groom and the bride based on a set of societal conventions and internalize specified traits and attributes. This chapter explores ways in which manyalo songs, as tools of empowerment, uphold gender equality.

The discussion of this chapter begins with a brief overview of Connell's views on gender. Following that, it reflects on the gender situation in pre-democratic South Africa. It then unpacks the literature review where gendered meaning in lyrics

¹²¹ Ballantine C. *Music and its Social Meanings* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1984).

¹²² Lebaka MEK. "Analysis of traditional Pedi religious songs for curricular application in primary school," *In die Skriflig* 48, no.1 (2014).

is discussed. The chapter turns to present the methodology used, before providing a detailed account of the results and discussion of the findings. Limitations and conclusion are presented thereafter.

Connell's views on gender: a brief overview

Connell's theory of gender, power and masculinities lays a sound foundation for broadening the academic scope of gender studies. According to Connell¹²³, gender is the way in which the society organizes practice at all levels of social organization from identities, symbolic rituals to large-scale institutions. As part of gender relation features, Connell brings the concepts of masculinities and femininities which become gender projects in the lives of individuals. Acknowledging the pluralistic nature of gender¹²⁴, this section focuses the specific gender binary of masculine and feminine according

¹²³ Connell R. *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

¹²⁴ Monro, Surya, Daniela Crocetti and Tracy Yeadon-Lee. "Gender Pluralism: How useful is it in supporting the health of transgender people?" 2nd European Professional Association for Transgender Health: Contemporary Trans Health in Europe: Focus on Challenges and Improvements, (2017).

to Connell. Same as other players in the gender discourse, masculinities have been conceptualized as multidimensional constructs through which individuals, regardless of gender, engage in gender practices, and the effects of these practices on bodily experience, personality and culture.¹²⁵ Furthermore, from different forms of femininity, Connell¹²⁶ defines one form around compliance with subordination and accommodation to the interests and desires of men. From these definitions, the gender order is hierarchical, which means there is consistently a higher value on masculinity than on femininity. This is because masculinity is regarded as that societal place that men and women can move into through practice while femininity is constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men¹²⁷. It is important to point out that instead of possessing masculinity or femininity, individuals move through and produce masculinity or femininity by engaging in

¹²⁵ Connell, *Masculinities*.

¹²⁶ Connell R. *Gender and power* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).

¹²⁷ Connell, *Masculinities*.

masculine or feminine practices. When these practices are embodied by either men or women, they have widespread cultural and social effects. In this way, gender is a recognizable set of practices that occur over time and across space and are taken up and endorsed collectively by societies. When adhered to over time, these practices arrange the distribution of power in the form of authority, cathexis and symbolism, or the production of meanings and values.¹²⁸ In Connell's theory, marginalization, hegemony, subordination, and complicity are aspects of the gender order that characterize the relationships between men and women, and among men and women. This gender situation is evident in the South African context.

Gender situation in pre-democratic South Africa: a brief overview

The power of parity in most African traditional rural societies is drawn through the traditional gender role beliefs¹²⁹. The existing literature has shown that it is mainly men who endorses the traditional

¹²⁸ Connell R. *The men and the boys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

¹²⁹ Dicke, *Traditional Gender Role*.

gender roles than women. Not only do men endorse the traditional gender role beliefs, but they play a huge role in the oppression of women. "The gender oppression school of historical analysis maintains that pre-colonial southern African women were confined in the domestic space and were oppressed by their men."¹³⁰ In the past, women were denied access to opportunities that offered financial security.¹³¹ Put differently, the reason why women, and African women in particular, continue to be absent from strategic forums offering access to economic and financial opportunities is due to the challenges brought by the traditional gender roles. Even though it is argued that Africa was the motherland where the societal position of women was complementary, rather than subordinate, to that of men, dominant literature portrays women as inadequate in performing tasks that are traditionally performed by men; hence they have been given lower status

¹³⁰ Moagi AL and Mtombeni B, *Women in Pre-colonial Africa: Southern Africa* (Palgrave Macmillan: Cham, 2020) 1.

¹³¹ Segalo P, "Gender, social cohesion and everyday struggles in South Africa," *PINS* 49, (2015): 70 – 82.

than men. According to Zondi¹³², “[r]epresentations of women in traditional literature, folklore, art and rituals indicate that there is an ambivalent attitude towards women.” Literature does not satisfactorily capture the active societal role of women in southern Africa and Africa in general. Available literature suggests that women played insignificant roles in societies. According to Moagi¹³³, men played a role in the omission of women in history because the production of mainstream historical literature was controlled by men. The assertions by Zondi¹³⁴, Segalo¹³⁵ and Moagi¹³⁶ emphasise Connell’s view on gender where marginalization, hegemony, subordination and complicity are aspects of the gender order. Though literature suggests that women have marginalised in various spaces, women themselves did not find comfort in the margins; they used everything at their disposal, including songs, to negotiate their spaces in

¹³² Zondi, *Bahlabelelelani*, 50.

¹³³ Moagi, *Women*, 2.

¹³⁴ Zondi, *Bahlabelelelani*.

¹³⁵ Segalo, “*Gender struggles*.”

¹³⁶ Moagi, *Women*.

communities. Moagi¹³⁷ asserts that gender oppression reduced women to mere objects of production and reproduction, however, Zondi¹³⁸ argues that women were never necessarily helpless as they have always had some means of expressing themselves in creative ways about issues that affect them. In her study, Zondi¹³⁹ argues that women and rural women in particular employed songs to negotiate their spaces in the culture. Needless to say, rural women used songs to express their frustrations and to get a sense of reprieve and solace for their troubles.

Gendered meaning in lyrics: literature review

Research into music has a long history in several disciplines. Much of the literature on music in gender positions describes music as a dynamic mode of gender and sexual signification and a putative agent of moral corruption. Music is a product of social processes, and is not separable from society, politics and critical issues of the

¹³⁷ Moagi, *Women*, 8.

¹³⁸ Zondi, *Bahlabelelelani*, 209.

¹³⁹ Zondi, *Bahlabelelelani*, 114.

day.¹⁴⁰ As part of society, music explores a wide range of individual, local and global concerns, contradictions and desires. One of the concerns in the musical arena is the question of gender and how it is portrayed by musical structures and gestures. The gender order refers to ways of doing or being in a given society, and acts as an overarching societal level constraint to which members of a particular society orient in their interactions. One of the principal tools of gender construction is gender pluralism, which occurs when diverse aspects of human experience are culturally linked to sex difference.¹⁴¹ This leads to a question of whether music can have an immanently gendered character.

Gender is discursively produced in and through cultural texts which are available to almost endless

¹⁴⁰ Njogu K and Maupeu H, *Songs and politics in eastern Africa* (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota: 2007).

¹⁴¹ Nall JA, "Fade to white or stereotype: Patriarchal policing of gender norms in television and filmic representations of childbirth," *Gender Questions* 2, no.1 (2014): 12–34.

(re)interpretation.¹⁴² One such cultural text that is always open to gender interpretation is musical lyrics, because music is considered a highly gendered form of expression. Lyrics of musical items can function as social mirrors providing the listener with a description of the world they live in, and as an aide to the construction of their social identity. In this way, musical lyrics shape perspectives, changes attitudes, questions authority, challenges human weaknesses. In the African context, in addition to other uses, “[w]omen used songs as an expression of their pent-up emotions due to their subordination and marital problems.”¹⁴³ This assertion reveals that music can be used to form or promote culture, distribute information, describe reality, express emotions, share knowledge, motivate and entertain. It can be social, political, economic, recreational, educational, emotional, therapeutic, and/or spiritual. Hence, the value of music in people's everyday lives depends on the uses they make of it

¹⁴² Taylor J, “Taking it in the ear: on musico-sexual synergies and the (queer) possibility that music is sex,” *Continuum* 26, (2012): 603–614.

¹⁴³ Zondi, *Bahlabelelelani*, 44.

and the degree to which they engage with it, which are in turn dependent on the contexts in which they hear it.¹⁴⁴ Music is securely positioned, through codes, within specific social contexts, such as political allegiances and gender positions. Codes are proper to music and are essentially intra-musical, they assist composers and listeners to interpret the music.

The ways in which listeners access, hear, listen to, engage with, value, and use music have changed dramatically over the years.¹⁴⁵ The type of music people listen to, and the message carried by those types of music has also changed with time. Composers have also changed to give the listeners, with diverse cultural backgrounds, what they need. Because of culturally encoded signals, music is dynamic and characterised as a cultural invention. Musical form and structure, *manyalo* songs in particular, have characteristics of a heavily gendered legacy bound up with issues of gender. Gender issues in musical composition are expressed

¹⁴⁴ North A, Hargreaves DJ and Hargreaves JJ, "Uses of music in everyday life," *Music Percept* 22, (2004): 41-77.

¹⁴⁵ North, "*Uses of music*."

in terms of the characteristics preferred by the society. According to Brett, Wood and Thomas¹⁴⁶, the basic structures of music have been held to be gendered and portraying gendered meanings. Hence some listeners engage with music as an essentially gendered discourse. The assertion by Brett et al is evidence why music comes across as a medium of a gendered hierarchy of political and social hegemony. Through its composition, music explores gender relations and cultural practices, even to extend beyond the boundaries of sexual orientation.

Music can reveal or conceal the experiences of composers. Composers can use music in ways that listeners are able to encode their experience of and relationship with gender. Semiotic codes of music can metaphorically associate the listener with the gendered meaning conveyed by the composer. “[T]he sounds of the composer’s musical gestures are the signifiers, they are symbolic representations of his or her experiences, and the listener must

¹⁴⁶ Brett P, Wood E and Thomas G, *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (Abingdon: Taylor Francis, 2006).

recognize the symbols in order to recover the same experiences—the music’s message—from the sounds, a process that requires that composer and listener share a common vocabulary.”¹⁴⁷ Music can consist of musical gestures that mark themes as either masculine or feminine, though the possibility of some ambiguity may exist. The gender of the composer may also have a contributing factor towards how gendered meaning is portrayed. One important question is to ask if there is an identifiable gender stereotyping in the composition of music, and if there is, which features of musical structure gives that away?

Method

The first step of the process was to collect and review *manyalo* songs whose lyrics communicate information relating to gender. Three (3) manyalo music platforms on YouTube containing at least 300 individual song titles were reviewed.

¹⁴⁷ Sergeant DC and Himonides E, “Gender and Music Composition: A Study of Music, and the Gendering of Meanings,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 7, (2016): 1.

- Pleasure Tsa Manyalo -
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWPdMAPij9itTd-164GbFbA/videos>
- Mrobi Motala -
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1gro4JZ8EyYnas_10Rhmlg
- Re Bina Manyalo Music -
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7fz1-ICkFYohvYLo8vzntA>

From these songs, 25 songs were selected: 10 by male artists, 10 by female artists and 5 by duets of a male and female artist. Songs included in the sample are all performed by artists who are Sepedi speakers or artist groups with significant representation of Sepedi speakers. The following table shows a list of sampled songs:

Table 1: List of sampled songs

Song Title	Artist(s) Sex	Artist(s) Name
<i>Lefotwana</i>	Female	Pleasure
<i>Laela</i>	Female	Pleasure
<i>Sekgameetse</i>	Female	Pleasure
<i>Setlapane</i>	Female	Esther
<i>Amogela</i>	Female	Ayanda
<i>Lesea</i>	Female	Ayanda

<i>Terene ya merwalo</i>	Female	Hellen
<i>Merwalo</i>	Female	Hellen
<i>Lefase la mahlomola</i>	Female	Unknown artist
<i>O pakile</i>	Female	Esther
<i>Ka moka ba nnyatša</i>	Male	Maredi
<i>Lesedi</i>	Male	Maredi
<i>Tiya Legogwa</i>	Male	S_George
<i>Mmatswale waka</i>	Male	S_George
<i>Ke kopa o nnyale</i>	Male	Ezrah
<i>Nthepe Sweety</i>	Male	Mokgaga
<i>Ga o šome</i>	Male	Mokgaga
<i>Baa hlokwa</i>	Male	Mokgaga
<i>Mapule</i>	Male	Mzet
<i>Mosadi wa ka</i>	Male	Mzet
<i>Bogadi ga go chabelwe</i>	Male and Female	Maredi & unknown artist
<i>Dipolelo</i>	Male and Female	Mokgaga & unknown artist
<i>Mopostola</i>	Male and	Tiisetso Swafo &

	Female	Ayanda
<i>Bogadi gaba nrate</i>	Male and Female	Maredi & unknown artist
<i>O ntapišitše</i>	Male and Female	Mokgaga & unknown artist

The lyrics of the song were analysed through discourse analysis¹⁴⁸ for two reasons¹⁴⁹:

- 1) the research had intrinsic interest in the language data collected and produced for entertainment purpose;
- 2) discourse analysis enables researchers to explore ordinary social life and everyday language use as part of social phenomena.

Discourse relates to the actual utterances in speech or writing in specific contexts of speaking and hearing or writing and reading.¹⁵⁰ The analysis approach of the lyrics focused on meaning and interpretation, which were achieved by exploring and understanding the meaning ascribed to gender

¹⁴⁸ Gee JP, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (London: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁴⁹ Taylor S, *What is Discourse Analysis?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

¹⁵⁰ Gee, *Discourse Analysis*.

hierarchy, heteronormativity, kinship norms and gender subversions.

In the third step, coding was done with reference to the three inter-related parts of Peirce's triadic model of the sign, namely: the sign, object and interpretant.¹⁵¹ In the context of this chapter, a *sign* is the specific lyrics of a particular song, an *object* is the gesture or reference to gender, and "[a]n *interpretant* is an interpretation or some other effect of the sign in the form of an idea, a feeling, a knowledge conveyed by the sign, an action, or reaction."¹⁵²

Lyrics for each song were transcribed and coded jointly for references to gender. A reference to gender is defined as words, phrases or sentences that refer to specific gender hierarchy, heteronormativity, kinship norms, gender subversions and altered states of feelings related to gender stereotypes. The number of gender mentions in each song and the verbatim

¹⁵¹ Atkin A, Peirce's Theory of Signs, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006.

¹⁵² Nöth W, "The Semiotics of Learning New Words," *J. Philos. Educ.* 48, (2014): 446-456.

transcription of each type of gender reference were recorded. In addition, the level of gender reference in all songs was coded in terms of gestures and structures engaged within a composition that possesses direct relationships to traits, qualities or behaviours perceived to be characteristic of either the masculine or feminine directions of gender. The mentions were coded as masculine or feminine by examining the overall context and consequences surrounding gender mention in each song. In addition, a series of codes were created to describe the social context of gender stereotype in lyrics.

Results and discussion

This chapter set out to explore if there are ways in which manyalo songs, as tools of empowerment, uphold gender equality. A strong relationship between music and gender has been reported in the literature. Musical lyrics are considered as signs that have predictable meaning whereby a gesture may lead to the recognition of what the music refers to. "A sign, in the framework of Peirce's semiotics can be a word, a picture, a gesture, a memory, a scene from real life, but also a mere

thought, an idea.”¹⁵³ Based on the foundation of the theory of signs laid by Charles S. Peirce, the relationship between the sign and the interpretant is important. Peirce thought that our interpretation of the signifying relation between sign and object relied upon understanding the basis of signification in any given case, and the generated interpretant itself.¹⁵⁴ This section provides the signs and objects, and focuses more on the interpretant, which is considered to be central to the content of the sign in that the meaning of a sign is manifest in the interpretation that it generates in sign users.¹⁵⁵ In the perspective of gender and power, patriarchal power relations depend on creating categories of inclusion and exclusion that involve (a) ascribing specific content to a social category, (b) establishing elements of distinction and the distances between social categories and, thereafter, (c) constituting an interest that organizes identity and action.¹⁵⁶ To ensure that the discussion and analysis are firmly grounded in the theoretical framework of

¹⁵³ Nöth, “Semiotics”.

¹⁵⁴ Atkin, *Theory of Signs*.

¹⁵⁵ Atkin, *Theory of Signs*.

¹⁵⁶ Connell, *Gender*.

semiotics, gender and power, themes are sorted into sets of complementary codes about how male and female singers think and feel in communicating their music. These themes included socioeconomic insecurity, submission, hegemonic tendencies, power, male sexual entitlement and social isolation.

Portrayal of marriage

The institution of marriage is an important aspect of all forms of human society¹⁵⁷, and socialisation exaggerates the difference between boys and girls¹⁵⁸ in relation to marriage. Across cultures, many young girls are socialised into believing that being married is the ultimate achievement they must aspire to reach. “[M]arriage signalled upward social mobility, economic and emotional stability, and religious achievement.”¹⁵⁹ This narrative ultimately portrays a stereotypical notion that

¹⁵⁷ Palamuleni ME, “Socioeconomic determinants of age at marriage in Malawi,” *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 3, no.7 (2011): 224-235.

¹⁵⁸ Adichie CN, *We Should All Be Feminists* (London: 4th Estate, 2014).

¹⁵⁹ Frahm-Arp M, “Singleness, Sexuality, and the Dream of Marriage,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 42, no.4 (2012): 369-383

young girls, or women in general, are desperate for marriage as an opportunity to alleviate *socioeconomic insecurity*. This stereotype is reinforced by *manyalo* songs such as the following:

<i>Darli ke kgale nna ke dula le</i>	I lived with you for so long
<i>wena,</i>	my love,
<i>nna ke kopa hle o nnyale</i>	please marry me
<i>Ka re o tla be wa bona</i>	you might meet light-
<i>mayellow-bone,</i>	skinned women,
<i>ba ntšeela wena, ke kopa hle</i>	who will snatch you away,
<i>o nnyale</i>	please marry me

-Ke kopa o nnyale (M)

The lyrics above portray a desperate call for marriage. It is also believed that in pursuit of marriage, people may even take desperate measures to secure it, resulting in undesirable consequences. "There are a host of myths that circulate in patriarchal culture about women and gender. They all have the implicit or explicit effect of disempowering women relative to men."¹⁶⁰ Sometimes the society believes that if a man loves a woman, it is because the woman gave the man a

¹⁶⁰ Byrne D, "New myths, new scripts: Revisionist mythopoesis in contemporary South African women's poetry," *Gender Questions* 2, no.1 (2014): 53.

love potion. This societal thinking is evident in the lyrics of the following popular *manyalo* song:

<i>Monna wa ka wa boulelwa</i>	My man is insecure
<i>Ke mo tšheletše ka le legolo</i>	I gave my man an overdose
<i>monna wa ka</i>	I gave him a love potion
<i>Ke mo tšheletše setlapane</i>	
<i>bana bešo</i>	

-Setlapane (F)

Situated in positions of subordination, women seek stability and emotional involvement from male partners.¹⁶¹ The lyrics above depict a desperate act of love gone wrong. In an attempt to emotional involvement from male partners, the woman gets a man who is a pest to her.

Portrayal of Women

There are songs that reposition women as belonging to the private sphere by re-establishing elements of distinction and the distances between social categories. These songs, in a way, lay down some societal expectations or customs that a woman needs to reach or follow. It is a societal expectation that once a woman is married, her agency rests on her husband and must submit to

¹⁶¹ Connell, *Gender*.

her husband and do everything to please the husband even if this makes her unhappy. The following song advises the woman to abide by the word of her husband by showing an act of *submission*:

<i>Monna'gago o kwa ka yena</i>	You take orders from your
<i>Tlogela bakgotse ngwanaka,</i>	man
<i>Monna ke hlogo ya lapa</i>	Stay away from friends
	A man is the head of the
	family

-Lesedi (M)

This is one of the songs sung by a man who assumingly sees nothing wrong with the perpetuation of *hegemonic tendencies* by the song. The song advises a woman to stop having friends because she has to listen to what her man says. The male artist continues by saying a man is the head of the family, his word reigns supreme. This precludes the participation of women and girls in how they are defined; their interests and needs are seen as of no consequence to satisfying male objectives in a heterosexual setting.¹⁶² This is not the only song

¹⁶² Mate R, "Youth Lyrics, Street Language and the Politics of Age: Contextualising the Youth Question in the Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38, no.1 (2012): 107-127.

that perpetuates stereotypical gender roles. The following song reinforces the stereotypical gender role held by most African societies that a woman's main character is nurturance:

<i>Tseba, monna wa gago ke</i>	Know that your husband is a
<i>senotlolo sa bareng</i>	key to
<i>Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi</i>	a bar
	The grave of a woman is at
	her in-laws

-Sekgametse (F)

In terms of the lyrics, marriage is a one-way ticket of no return. It is self-evident in the lyrics of the song that women are seen as inferior to men, thus they have to assume a submissive posture. A song by a female artist carrying a message that puts women in a submissive position. "Under hegemonic systems, even the disadvantaged tend to adopt the perspective of those in power."¹⁶³ Though the song is sung by a female, it endorses the traditional gender role beliefs. The gender order is hierarchical, which means there is consistently a higher value on masculinity than on femininity.¹⁶⁴ A

¹⁶³ Stainback K, Kleiner S and Skaggs S, "Women in power: Undoing or Redoing the Gendered Organization?" *Gender & Society* 30, no.1 (2016): 114.

¹⁶⁴ Connell, *Gender*.

particular dominant form of masculinity is validated – as powerful, physical, rational and located in the public sphere, while certain femininities are endorsed – as passive, dependent, emotional and located in the domestic, private sphere.¹⁶⁵ The following song explicitly portrays women as subordinates to men:

<i>Ke ya hlophega ka gare ga</i>	I am suffering in this
<i>lenyalo le</i>	marriage
<i>Monna wa ka ga a ntlhokomele</i>	My man does not take
<i>ke bolawa ke tlala a dutše a</i>	care of me
<i>šoma</i>	I am starving even if he is
<i>Maloba mo ge re nyalana</i>	working
<i>batswadi ba rile mosadi ke</i>	On our wedding day,
<i>lefotwana o a selelwa</i>	parents said you hunt for
	your wife

-Lefotwana (F)

By putting emphasis on their dependence on men, *Lefotwana*, a song by a female artist puts women in a weak position. The lyrics of the song explicitly propagate the message of male dominance over females and perpetuate the traditional gender role belief that women must depend on men for

¹⁶⁵ Prinsloo J. 'Where have they all gone? Media (ted) representations of fatherhood.' In *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*, edited by Morrell, Robert and Linda Richter. Cape Town: HSRC Press. 2006.

support. Women, on the other hand, still retain a much closer tie with family care and domestic responsibilities, linked to current manifestations of the 'gender order'. At the same time, some songs are not doing justice to efforts of recognising long-term and intergenerational dynamics of gender order. Therefore, "there is a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better."¹⁶⁶ However, the status quo remains.

The multi-faceted nature of factors that influence the existing gender order highlights the extreme manifestation of power inequalities. Sometimes cultural institutions can reinforce power inequities between men and women.¹⁶⁷ "Popular culture is a crucially significant terrain for the maintenance as well as the subversion of existing power structures and oppressions."¹⁶⁸ After weddings, it is an expectation from the society that the woman has to adopt a new life with the in-laws. In a patriarchal society, the woman should stop practices and norms that brought her up, and venture into their

¹⁶⁶ Adichie, *Feminists*, 48.

¹⁶⁷ Connell, *Gender*.

¹⁶⁸ Nall, *stereotype*, 14.

husband's culture effective immediately. This expectation is captured under gender roles because it is expected that a woman leaves her family to live with the family of her husband; she is expected to drop her maiden surname and take that of her husband; she stops rituals of her family and starts to perform those of her husband. Therefore, women are brought under the domination or control of men. Through both the newlyweds make changes from their pre-marital lives to post marital, it is, however, stereotypically assumed that the bride must conform to the norms and practices of her husband even if she does not approve of them. Literature highlighted that women employ songs to express their frustrations and to get a sense of reprieve and solace for their troubles. The evidence of this assertion is carried in songs such as the following:

<i>Banna le basadi nthušeng ka</i>	Men and women help me in
<i>motseng wa ka</i>	my family
<i>Nna ke mozalwane ke nyetšwe</i>	We are members of different
<i>ke mopostola</i>	churches
<i>Jwale o a mmakatša o re ke</i>	Now he wants me to leave
<i>lese bozalwane</i>	my church
<i>Nna ke mozalwane ke hwa le</i>	I am a believer I will die with
<i>bozalwane</i>	my belief

Go a swana re rapela Modimo Besides, we pray to the same
o tee God

-Mopostola (M & F)

The woman in this duet song is using her lyrics to negotiate her agency in the culture. She is employing the lyrics of the song to express her frustrations and to get a sense of reprieve and solace for her predicament. In a patriarchal society, women are considered to be showing a lack of wisdom or judgement. When faced with difficult situations, they are expected to wait for either their husbands or fathers to provide solutions. It is argued that this perception about women communicates stereotypical gender arrangements. Nonetheless, contrary to popular beliefs that women's status is portrayed as inferior, it appears that the camouflaged message contained in the lyrics of the '*Mopostola*' song encourages women to challenge their standing in marital affairs. The woman in the song is challenging the version of her male counterpart that is aligned with the traditional gender beliefs. This affirms Zondi's¹⁶⁹ argument that women are not necessarily helpless as they

¹⁶⁹ Zondi, *Bahlabelelelani*, 209.

have some means of expressing themselves in creative ways about issues that affect them.

Portrayal of Men

“Societies tend to confer a higher social value on men than women, and a range of norms and powers derive from this.”¹⁷⁰ ‘A man is the head of the family’, this is what is commonly known in Sepedi communities. This statement associates men with *power*. The theme of power continues to be regarded as a trait of masculinity. In Sepedi community, men are considered to be powerful individuals, and the community is socialised into believing that men should always be in control of essential aspects of life. There are songs that portray men as powerful individuals. For example,

<i>Ye yona taba e nyaka bo majadihlogo</i>	This issue requires the presence of uncles
<i>Baswana ba boletše ba re theeletša mosadi</i>	The forefathers said listen as a woman
<i>Bogadi ge ba loya o loya le bona Bogadi ge ba utswa o utswa le bona</i>	When the in-laws bewitch you must do as well

¹⁷⁰ Jewkes R, Flood M and Lang J, “From work with men and boys to changes of social norms and reduction of inequities in gender relations: a conceptual shift in prevention of violence against women and girls,” *Lancet* 385, (2015): 1581.

When they steal, you must steal with them

-Mopostola (M & F)

Power as a patriarchal characteristic gives men a sense of entitlement. This is consistent with the recognition that patriarchy defines both the public and private domains.¹⁷¹ Men are made to believe that women are subordinate, and they as men are in charge of women's lives. This creates a platform for a 'patriarchal dividend' supported by the majority of men as they benefit from the overall subordination of women.¹⁷² To women, this makes them less powerful. They are not in charge of their own; they are made to believe that they are properties of men. Another theme observed in these songs is *male sexual entitlement*. One of the pieces of advice given to men during wedding celebrations is that they must not be lazy in bed. This advice is also presented in some songs. These songs actively promote inequitable sexual beliefs by encouraging men to

¹⁷¹ Chisale SS. "Patriarchy and Resistance: A Feminist Symbolic Interactionist Perspective of Highly Educated Married Black Women", (2017).

¹⁷² Connell, *Masculinities*.

show their manhood and virility through sexual experimentation. "Inequitable beliefs around ... male sexual entitlement [condition] women's trajectories into marriage, marital power dynamics (particularly around sexual decision making)."¹⁷³ There are songs where male artists constantly keep on singing the same lines over and over again, emphasising their authority as men and the importance of sexual activity. The way in which role of gender is arranged in societies affects sexual behaviour. In a social context in which women are taught to be sexually available for their husbands, the social expectations undermine the woman's ability to engage in sexual relations on her own terms.¹⁷⁴ The societal gender roles induce men to feel powerful and want to be dominant in sexual practices while women are made to believe that it is their duty to take care of men's sexual desires and needs. "Many of these founding narratives are drawn from strongly patriarchal societies, and they naturally reflect male-centred

¹⁷³ Miedema SS, Shwe S and Kyaw AT, "Social Inequalities, Empowerment, and Women's Transitions into Abusive Marriages: A Case Study from Myanmar," *Gender & Society* 30, no.4 (2016): 686.

¹⁷⁴ Miedema, "Social Inequalities".

views of the world and human interaction.”¹⁷⁵ Situated in positions of power, men enjoy the fruit of ‘patriarchal dividend’ by actively pursuing sexual relationships, treating women as sexual objects, and being demanding in sexual situations.¹⁷⁶ The portrayal of sexual behaviour does not end with men being encouraged to be sexually powerful, but there is a depiction of men being involved in inappropriate sexual practices. Men are stereotypically portrayed as individuals who are incapable to contain themselves when it comes to sex. They are thought to enact inappropriate behaviour by experiencing their sexual feelings as uncontrollable, exploit female sexual desire and avoid commitment and emotional attachment with women. The following lyrics, for example, portray a man with uncontrollable sexual feelings:

<i>Wena mogatšaka o itirile terene</i>	My love you made
<i>ya merwalo</i>	yourself a goods’ train
<i>Fela nna ke tlo iphološa (or e</i>	But I will offload it
<i>fološa)</i>	Stop lying to them
<i>Wena tlogela go ba fora</i>	

-Terene ya merwalo (F)

¹⁷⁵ Byrne, “myths,” 53.

¹⁷⁶ Connell, *Gender*.

The lyrics above portray men as individuals who are selfishly in pursuit of the satisfaction of their sexual desires and needs. Women, on the other hand, are depicted as those who are emotionally invested in that particular relationship. Most of the songs portray men as capable of infidelity, thus perpetuating the stereotype that men are cheaters.

In a patriarchal society, males, particularly the groom, are socialised to be providers as heads of the families. Money is regarded as a source of men's authority in the household.¹⁷⁷ This leads to unemployed men being taken for granted and not regarded as men enough, which often leads to *social isolation*. *Manyalo* songs play a vital role in the promotion of this gender arrangement. Because unemployed men are seen as financially unstable in a society, they end up losing their partners. "Gender ideologies, as overarching systems of beliefs prescribing how men and women should behave, affect both the meaning and structure of

¹⁷⁷ Anderson N, "Provide and Protect: Gendering Money in Ukrainian Households," *Gender & Society* 31, no.3 (2017): 359–382.

the monetary exchange.”¹⁷⁸ This also stems from the socialisation of young girl who are brought up to depend on men. As a result, if a man cannot provide, then he does not deserve to have a relationship. The following song is an emotional expression of a male artist who says he was left by his wife because he is not working.

<i>O nlahlile(sic) Nthepe yoo</i>	<i>You have forsaken me Nthepe</i>
<i>O ntlogetše Nthepe yoo</i>	<i>You left me Nthepe</i>
<i>Gobane ke feletšwe ke</i>	<i>Because I lost my job, my love</i>
<i>mošomo sweety</i>	<i>Because I no longer have</i>
<i>Gobane ga ke sana tšhelete</i>	<i>money, sweetheart</i>
<i>sweety</i>	

-Nthepe Sweety (M)

The problem of undermining uneducated and unemployed men is rooted deep in the society, and it starts with parents. Some parents do not want their children to be married by men who are unemployed. These men are projected as being less responsible and incapable. “[M]en of limited means are not necessarily sympathised with either. They are seen as people of no consequence, or as nuisances.”¹⁷⁹ The lyrics above create a

¹⁷⁸ Anderson, “Gendering Money,” 363.

¹⁷⁹ Mate, “Youth Lyrics,” 116.

stereotypical narrative that unemployed men cannot take care of their family. Furthermore, it perpetuates female dependency on men. It continues disseminating power as a normal male attribute. "By providing for the family in some manner, men felt they had earned a masculine status."¹⁸⁰ Those who seem not to have that power are undermined. Because the society has created stereotypical gender roles, life becomes difficult for men who do not meet the standards of what the society deems manly.

Satire

According to Mbunda-Nekang¹⁸¹, "[s]atire manifests in folktales, masquerade performances, proverbs as well as in songs." *Manyalo* songs are no exception. The discussions above detail the literal interpretation of the lyrics. However, an analysis of the lyrics can also bring to light provocative and subtle means through which songs can address issues of discrimination and inequality by the use of

¹⁸⁰ Anderson, "Gendering Money," 369.

¹⁸¹ Mbunda-Nekang FM, "Satirical lore in Oku," *International Journal of Education and Research* 4, no.1 (2016): 363.

symbolism, camouflaged lyrics and satire.¹⁸² In the context of the *manyalo* songs mentioned above, the artists may be using satire to address marriage issues. In instances where marriage may be seen as a one-way ticket and a sign that women are inferior, the high divorce rate and an increase in the number of single-parent families in South Africa may be viewed from a perspective that the lyrics are grooming women and teaching them to build strong families. Thus, the artists may be using irony or sarcasm in their lyrics to mock the culture that is seen in most marriages. The lyrics below may be interpreted as a way of exposing, ridiculing and denouncing abuse, folly and vice within society.¹⁸³

<i>Monna'gago o kwa ka yena</i>	You take orders from your
<i>Tlogela bakgotse ngwanaka,</i>	man
<i>Monna ke hlogo ya lapa</i>	Stay away from friends
	A man is the head of the
	family

“Satirical music ... has the capacity to form part of an oppositional culture and, by means of ridicule, symbolically relegate aspects of the dominant

¹⁸² Drewett M, An analysis of the censorship of popular music within the context of cultural struggle in South Africa during the 1980s. PhD Thesis. (Rhodes University, 2004).

¹⁸³ Mbunda-Nekang, “Satirical”.

culture to the margins.”¹⁸⁴ Although the lyrics can be literally interpreted as a way of informing women to obey their husbands, they can also be interpreted as a way grooming women and teaching them to build strong characters to withstand patriarchal abuse. In satirical lyrics, the essence of the song is not immediately apparent, hence the lyrics can also be interpreted literally. Therefore, *manyalo* songs can be seen as parodies that produce an imitation which mocks the societal practices for instructional purposes: to teach the virtues of marital abuses, inequality and all forms of discrimination. The satirical interpretation of *manyalo* songs presents polysemic perspectives where meaning is assigned depending on the individual’s cultural background, level of education, gender awareness, social class, age, worldview and so on.

The lyrics of the songs discussed in this chapter create stereotypical conformity of individuals where power is fixed and gender roles are drawn with the aim of aligning the couple to what the society deems to be a woman or man. The musical

¹⁸⁴ Drewett, censorship, 225.

world that we so take for granted should today be a cause for grave concern rather than for the complacency that so typically attends it.¹⁸⁵ These words were said in 1984 but they are still relevant even today. Be that as it may, “[t]he curious beauty of African music is that it uplifts even as it tells a sad tale. You may be poor, you may have only a ramshackle house, you may have lost your job, but that song gives you hope” - Nelson Mandela.

Limitations

One limitation faced of this chapter is the inability of the researcher to avoid subjectivity. Therefore, this research study may not be bias-free. The interpretation of the lyrics may have been subjective. It is, therefore, possible for other researchers to find different meanings of the songs. Moreover, the discussed themes here emerged from only 25 Sepedi *manyalo* songs; the inclusion of more songs might give raise to other themes that might provide a counter argument.

¹⁸⁵ Ballantine, *Social Meanings*.

Conclusion

In line with the Green Paper on marriages which upholds gender equality, amongst other things, songs are assumed to be some of the tools through which women are empowered.¹⁸⁶ Through the satirical interpretation of *manyalo* songs, the lyrics are assumed to be challenging a status quo that requires women not to question the order of things in their marriages, thus empowering them. However, the literal discussion of the different themes above depicted suggestions of gender stereotypes. Most of the themes reveal the patriarchal nature of the Sepedi-speaking community. Not only do they reveal the patriarchal nature of the society, but also depict the conventional gender hierarchy, heteronormativity, gender subversions and kinship norms, and reinforce the already existing stereotypical gender roles. This musical genre from both male and female singers, including duets, exposes evolving 'social power dynamics' which paradoxically both reaffirm existing stereotypes of gender through the

¹⁸⁶ Zondi, *Bahlabelelelani*, 224.

repackaging of some groups and their stereotypes for the entertainment industry.¹⁸⁷

Furthermore, there seemed to be no clear differences in the discourse of songs sung by men, women or duets. The songs appear to highlight, perpetuate and promote the existing gender order. It appears that *manyalo* singers do not challenge hegemonic tendencies. Adopting Connell's concept of the gender order, the chapter argues that manyalo songs' gendered representation of men's and women's roles in the society does not challenge patriarchal dividends and perceptions about gender equality, thereby perhaps perpetuating a patriarchal culture. The lyrics of the songs are found to carry patriarchal beliefs, thus providing constant justification of the chauvinistic and misogynistic social structures. Depending on one's vantage point, the standing of women in society seems to be undermined or affirmed. The songs come across as media used to promote existing patriarchal gender expectations. In particular, the selected songs present a situation of gender inequality and injustice. Moreover, the

¹⁸⁷ Mate, "Youth Lyrics."

majority of the songs are more critical of women than men. The portrayal of the female gender in these songs vehemently reinforces the typical gender roles, traditional gender order and inequality.

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