NEGOTIATING MASCULINITIES AS AFRICAN STUDENTS AT NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

By Osei Akoto Kwarteng

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Approved:

Leah Mundell, Ph.D., Chair

Björn Krondorfer, Ph.D.

Emery Rose Eaves, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

NEGOTIATING MASCULINITIES AS AFRICAN STUDENTS AT NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY.

OSEI AKOTO KWARTENG

This study explores the experiences and perceptions of African students at an American university, focusing on their experiences of negotiating their masculinities in their new cultural context. In this study, the objective was to explore African students' expectations of being a man both in their home countries and in the US, and how they negotiate their masculinities at Northern Arizona University (NAU).

This study assumes that masculinity is a social construct, and among African graduate students at NAU, additional culturally specific ideologies may influence the way they perceive their identity and experiences of being a man, and also the means by which they negotiate their masculinities.

The study adopted purposive sampling and semi-structured, in-depth interviewing in selecting and interviewing participants. Participants were male African students pursuing a graduate degree program at NAU who had successfully completed a semester on campus. Specifically, 10 participants were sampled and were from Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Ghana.

The study explored expectations of being a man and masculinities among African graduate students at NAU. The study found that among participants, expectations of being a man were responsibilities, head of family / household, and financial obligations. Participants understanding of masculinity emphasized the male genitalia, being in charge, and emotional restriction. In the

US, participants believed that norms of masculinity mostly relate to shared responsibility, and freedom of gender expression. Also, respect for cultural differences, avoiding interactions, and cultural association with other African men were stances that characterize mechanisms participants adopt in negotiating their masculinities.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background of study

This study explored the experiences and perceptions of African students at an American university, focusing on their experiences of negotiating their masculinities in their new cultural context. The aim of this study was to explore African students' expectations of being a man, and how they negotiate their masculinities in the US.

Being a Ghanaian, a man, and an African student in NAU afforded me a much deeper understanding in exploring this objective. I faced challenges in conforming to American values dominant at NAU that conflicted with my role as a man when I was in Ghana. My experiences of being a man in Ghana related to bearing responsibilities, having a partner, and raising and providing for the family (Daniel Y. Fiaveh et al. 2015; Daniel Yaw Fiaveh 2020). In Ghana, being a man or being deemed a boy does not relate to age, but rather cultural expectations. Family also did not include only the nuclear family, but mostly comprised the extended family, and in some instances, the community. The notion of being a sole provider and being a man without conforming to these cultural expectations was somewhat rare, reflecting on my Ghanaian experience.

However, in the US, studies have shown that dominant cultural and societal expectations and norms associated with being a man mostly include being independent, being strong, and staying competitive (Luciano 2007; Franklin II 2012; Foste and Davis 2018; Connell 2020). These studies highlight independence and individuality in terms of being a man in the US, and a feeling of

shared responsibility in the nuclear family. However in African societies, being a man mostly comprises responsibilities, being head of family / household, and being sole provider / breadwinner (Suggs 2001; Salamone 2006; Uchendu 2007; Tamale 2011; Smith 2017).

Participants in this study do not only stress financial obligations in the family, but also financial obligations in potential romantic / sexual relationships. From my experience as a man in Ghana, most romantic / sexual relationships are characterized by the expectation of meeting financial obligations / demands from the woman.

Masculinity is a social construct, and in African societies, specifically Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Ghana, masculinity may be similar or different in terms of norms and expectations. In Malawi for instance, masculinity is being a sole provider, breadwinner, head of the family, and bearing responsibilities (Apthorpe 1964; Phiri 2007; Wilson and Kachipande 2020). Likewise, Holland (2005) explains that among the Shona of Zimbabwe, masculinity entails the expectation to fulfill culturally defined masculine duties. This is true for most societies in Africa (Suggs 1996; Woods and Page 2000; Trager 2001; Uchendu 2007; Tamale 2011; Skovdal et al. 2011; Tamale 2014; Van Heerden, Msweli, and Van Rooyen 2015; Smith 2017; Shire 2016; Wilson and Kachipande 2020). In Nigeria, masculinity is understood as having male genitalia, responsibilities towards the family, male dominance, and being the head of the family or household (Uchendu 2007). According to Fiaveh et al. (2015), among Ghanaian societies, masculinity primarily denotes sexual dominance of the male figure, getting married, having children, and taking care of the family.

Also, in this study, gender is not a static category, but rather a set of socially constructed relationships which are produced and reproduced through people's actions (Gerson and Peiss

1985). Connell (1995) explained that gender is a dynamic dialectic relationship, and something that one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others (West and Zimmerman 1987). Most importantly, gender does not reside in the person, but rather in social transactions defined as gendered (Bohan 1993; Crawford 1995).

From this perspective, this study assumes that masculinity is a social construct, and among African graduate students at NAU, additional culturally specific ideologies may influence the way they perceive their identity and experiences of being a man, and also the means by which they negotiate their masculinities.

It is from this background that I conceptualize the questions in this study and explore how African students negotiate their masculinities in NAU.

The study adopted purposive sampling and semi-structured, in-depth interviewing in selecting and interviewing participants. Participants were male African students pursuing a graduate degree program at NAU who had successfully completed a semester on campus. Specifically, 10 participants were sampled and were from Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Ghana. They were between the ages of 25 and 41 years. Participants from Malawi and Zimbabwe all had children and dependents mostly family members whom they are taking care of. These participants were 37 and 38 years old. With Nigeria, all participants were single with no children and between the ages of 25 – 32 years old; and only one participant from Ghana was married.

In this study, participants perceived the male genitalia as one of the main features in defining a man. Participants perceptions regarding expectations of being a man and masculinity emphasized responsibilities, financial obligations, provision, leadership, care, strength, respect,

emotional restriction, head of family / household, and marriage. These were understood as being in charge, power, and superiority, and thus puts pressure on participants. However, with participants, this pressure cements their identities as men, and in performing these pressures, they both meet expectations of being a man and exhibit masculinity.

The challenges of exhibiting their masculinity in the US reflected participants understanding of shared responsibility, and gender independence. Shared responsibility which is closely related to the idea of relieving pressure, simply denotes shared economic responsibility between the man and woman. Gender independence also signifies gender identity and expression which differs from what participants expect of culturally defined roles associated with sex.

Participants adopt one of two approaches to overcome these challenges: respect or avoidance of interactions. Respect in this study is the idea of consciously negotiating and embracing new masculine identities dominant in NAU. Avoiding interaction is the notion of upholding traditional masculinity in actions or behaviors of separation, such that power is exerted. To participants, traditional masculinity is important, and supersedes other forms of masculinity.

Participants shared that the process of negotiating their masculinity in the US leads to a feeling of community among other African students. Tamale (2011) and Pasura and Christou (2018) explained that among African men, ideologies of expectations of being a man and masculinity mostly highlight responsibilities, family, and being in charge, and for this reason, African men tend to seek spaces which affirms such values.

Objectives of study

In this study, the objective was to explore:

1. African students' expectations of being a man – This specifically assessed participants perceptions of the cultural and societal expectations of being a man.

2. How African students negotiate their masculinities in NAU – This objective explored participants understanding of masculinity in relation to their perceptions of their cultural and societal expectations of being a man and explored their challenges of negotiating their expectations of being a man and masculinities in the US.

Organization of thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study and discusses the study's objectives in addition to overall participants perceptions regarding expectations of being a man and masculinity. Chapter two looks at relevant literature and empirical studies on masculinity. Specifically, it discusses African masculinities, African-American masculinities, the distinction between African masculinities and African-American masculinities, social constructions of masculinities, masculine norms, religion and sexuality, and masculinity and mental health. Chapter three gives an overview of the methodology adopted in conducting this study. Chapter four discusses the study's themes in reference to relevant literature, and Chapter five sums up the study and explores literature on how masculinity is changing in Africa.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The study draws on literature pertaining to African masculinities, African masculinities and African-American masculinities, masculinities in non-African settings, social constructions of male masculinities, hegemonic masculine norms and stereotypes of Africans living in the US, religion and sexuality, and masculinity and health.

African masculinities

The expression "African masculinities" provokes the concern of what is "Africa", or what is "African?" Zeleza (2005; 2010) defines Africa in terms of its history, geography, material and imagined places, and its people. According to Mudimbe (1988), Africa is also a product of colonial and postcolonial constructions. Pasura and Christou (2018) further explain that in defining Africa, one must pay attention to the historical role of slavery and colonialism, in addition to Western concepts such as modernity and globalization, and how this shapes the conceptions and ideologies of Africa as the "other", not just its peoples and religions, but also its cultural practices.

Thus, in understanding African masculinities, the challenge is to understand models which are theoretically suggestive and sensitive to the local experiences without losing focus of the global forces that shape them. From this premise, this study draws on literature exploring African masculinities both in African societies and the diaspora.

In non-African societies, masculinity is linked to the value and ethic of individuality. According to Rapport (1997), in most societies of the Global North, the idea of masculinity stems from the characteristic of personhood. Kimmel (1994) further elaborates that the conceptualization of masculinity in the Global North may not be applicable to non-Western societies since it deems

masculinity as being about performances and everyday accomplishments, undertaken and performed by individually oriented actors. These values of individuality may not have the same resonance in other cultural contexts.

Oyewumi (1997; 2006) critiques African scholars for adopting Kimmel's (1994) idea of masculinity to African societies. He explains that Kimmel's (1994) and Connell's (1985; 1993; 1998; 2001) ideas of masculinity are specific to societies of the Global North and hence not applicable to non-Western societies. Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) highlight that Kimmel's and Connell's masculinity theories reduce the reality of gender to bodily representations, displays, and some verifiable biological features, i.e., genes, and hormones. Gbadegesin (2004) explains that in African societies, people are perceived as having both physical and non-physical features, and this impacts their behavior and personality. He further indicates that in most African societies, the non-physical features or supernatural unseen forces supersede the physical and seen features. Kimmel (1994) also elaborates that in African societies, masculinity is accomplished in social practice, just as in other societies specifically of the Global North; however, amongst African societies, although masculinity is accomplished in front of other men, it is believed to have an essence, that is, masculinity is accomplished in tandem with physical (in front of other men) and non-physical (ancestors, and supernatural forces) features.

Suggs' study (1996; 2001) indicates that among African societies, men prove their masculinity in diverse ways including having multiple sexual partners, alcohol consumption, homophobia, being breadwinners, bearing responsibilities, dress code, and violence. Likewise, among the Iteso of Uganda and Kenya, men demonstrate their masculinity by attending communal beer drinking sessions. Among the Xhosa of South Africa and Zimbabwe, men are expected to demonstrate

their masculinity through specific phrases, speech, or language known among specific groups of masculine men (Mfecane 2016; 2018).

Pasura and Christou (2018) explain that the notion of a man being a breadwinner in African societies was reinforced when Africans converted to Christianity, since Christianity stressed the man as being the head of family and household, and monogamous marriage. Davies (2007) highlighted that since the 1980s, many African states incorporated policies of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and these implementations brought severe hardships to African economies. This economic decline in Africa has brought attention to the crisis of masculinities, since in the past two decades, as a result of scarce resources, men are finding it hard to achieve historically what might have been seen as successful masculinity (Davies 2007; Ratele 2014; Gibbs 2014). From this brief overview, it is clear that African masculinities are diverse and have undergone changes, however, amongst most African societies, masculinities are constructed under the influence of patriarchal ideology (Pasura and Christou 2018), and thus, masculinities in Africa comprise a level of financial independence, employment, income, and being able to start and cater for family, including extended family (Pasura and Christou 2018).

African masculinities and African-American masculinities

The history of slavery, racism, and oppression shapes African-American masculinities in the US; this influences how African-American men navigate their gender and masculinity and also dictates how they are perceived (Rogers, Sperry, and Levant 2015). In contrast, African masculinities are shaped by diverse African cultural traditions rooted in colonialism and post-colonial ideologies (Pasura and Christou 2018). Further, studies have shown that while African masculinity places greater emphasis on financial obligations with a focus on education and advancement (Smith 2017), African-American masculinities often focus on strong family and community networks, since African-American men have historically been excluded from White American society and still face issues of systemic racism (Dancy 2012).

Also, religious beliefs distinguish African masculinities and African-American masculinities. African masculinities are mostly shaped by a mix of Christianity, Islam, and traditional beliefs. This influences and dictates gender norms and masculinity (Tamale 2014). Among African-Americans, Christianity is the common and dominant religion, and this leads to different interpretations of gender norms and masculinity (Chandler 2007).

In addition, the political context of African societies in comparison to the US differs, and this also defines what African masculinities are and what African-American masculinities are. For instance, in the US, African-American men face issues of racism, poverty, and social exclusion (Rogers, Sperry, and Levant 2015). However, in African societies, issues of civil wars, and other forms of political and economic instability shape the way in which men navigate their identity and masculinity (Mfecane 2018).

In addition, African-American men exhibit their masculinity in ways that challenges prevalent norms of masculinity in the US. For instance, African-American men use hip-hop culture and fashion as avenues of expressing their masculinity in the US; these tend to highlight toughness in face of oppression, and hypermasculinity (Dancy 2011). African men, however, often exercise their masculinity through the feeling of duties to the family and communities. With this, they mostly seek achievements through education and career in helping their families and communities (Knoetze 2019).

Issues of gender and sexuality also differ among African men and African-American men. In African societies, homosexuality is stigmatized and often criminalized (Kimmel 2013). However, among African-Americans, there is often broader acceptance of diverse gender expressions and sexual orientations, supported by the same sex rights movement in the US (Luciano 2007).

Thus, understanding the differences between African masculinities and African-American masculinities provide a background in understanding the issues relating to gender and masculinity among African graduate students, and African–American graduate students.

Masculinities in non-African settings

Masculinity as a subject of inquiry and scholarship gained recognition in the 1980s (Brod 1994; Brod and Kaufman 1994). Studies based in non-African settings or societies theorize masculinity as a structure of gender relations, is rooted in Gramsci's sociological idea of cultural hegemony, which emphasizes the dominance of one group over others (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). In many Western settings, masculinity is linked to the idea of patriarchy, and it is grounded in the continued dominance of men over women, and heterosexual men over homosexuals. According to Connell (2001), this concept of masculinity reflects a position of cultural authority of heterosexual men over homosexual men, and men over women, rather than complete dominance. Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) explain that in the US, masculinity exists as a form of social agency in which masculinity is performed by men in front of other men, women, and society. The scholars further explain that the concept of masculinity in the US and other Western societies (i.e., non-African societies) privileges social agency over other modes of understanding and knowing the world (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009).

Kimmel's (1994; 2013) notion of masculinity also emphasizes agency in which he explains that masculinity is a construct that is socially formed, and not a natural identity. Kimmel further argued that masculinity reinforces the perception that people create their own worlds, and identities. Kimmel's masculinity theory focuses on the social construction of masculinity and ways in which men in Western societies (in this study, non-African societies) are socialized to conform to certain gender norms and behaviors. Its application to African societies has been critiqued by different scholars. For instance, Jewkes and Morrell (2010) criticize Kimmel's theory of socialization and identity and explain that his theory focuses on individual-level factors, and in

African societies, gender roles and expectations are shaped by broader cultural and societal factors. Likewise Brown et al. (2005) and Skovdal et al. (2011) criticize Kimmel's theory of masculinity for its disregard to specific cultural and historical factors that shape masculinity and influence men's behavior in African societies, and argue that African masculinities are diverse and complex, and in explaining or theorizing masculinities in the African sense, emphasis must be made to historical factors such as colonialism, globalization, hunger, poverty, and disease (Pasura and Christou 2018).

Social constructions of male masculinities

According to Connell (1987), gender embodies relations of power. Lorber (2018) argues that gender is a social construct and is created and reinforced through cultural practices, and interactions, and thus, it is not a matter of biology, but rather power relations between men and women. Hooks (2000; 2019) explained that gender is a complex system of power relations that affects all aspects of social life and fosters imbalances of equality and inequality.

In this study, gender means material and ideological relations and consequences based on social distinction of male and female physical differences. Gender expectation on the other hand constitutes normative conceptions of appropriate attitudes, activities, behaviors, and actions for a particular gendered group.

In most societies, it is not biology but social institutions, interactions, and practices that limit sex to activities or categorizations defined as either masculine or feminine (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Masculinity in this study is socially constructed and can change. Further, this study assumes that masculinity is not one way of being for men; rather, it takes a variety of forms, and

it is different for diverse social groups and societies (Tamale 2011; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009; Rogers, Sperry, and Levant 2015; Shire 2016; Smith 2017), i.e., masculinity for the working class is different from masculinity of the upper class, masculinity for homosexuals is different from masculinity of heterosexuals, masculinity of college students is different from masculinity of non-college students, and most importantly, masculinity for African graduate students in NAU is different from masculinity of African-American graduate students in NAU.

Hegemonic masculine norms and stereotypes of Africans living in the US

In Western societies (i.e., non-African societies), masculine norms expect men to adhere to hegemonic masculinity (Pleck 1995). According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), hegemonic masculinity relates to the practices that symbolize the dominant and most endorsed forms of masculinity prevailing in society, for instance, heterosexual and White masculinity. Connell (2005) explained that through the context of hegemonic masculinity, men can dominate other men through privileged positions that afford advantages, such as higher incomes. Hegemonic masculinity subordinates' other masculinities, and as such, expectations of conformity tend to be stressful. Fragoso and Kashubeck (2000) research found that, adherence to hegemonic masculinity creates two forms of stress: first, men from minority groups who firmly commit to hegemonic masculinity gender roles are expected to experience increased psychological distress and depression, alcohol abuse, substance use, sexual risk behaviors, poorer relationship satisfaction, and violence (Aldarondo, Kantor, and Jasinski 2002; Fiorentino, Berger, and Ramirez 2007; Gonzalez-Guarda et al. 2010). Secondly, men from minority groups who fail to display hegemonic masculinity also experiences distress since they are not adhering to dominant masculine norms (Falicov 2010).

The assumption here is that performing masculinity may be stressful for African graduate students in NAU since they must constantly negotiate African cultural values with mainstream American values and ideals of masculinity dominant at NAU. This informs the study's objective of exploring how African students perform masculinity in NAU, and how this impact their interactions. Thus, African students in NAU must reconcile the dominant American cultural gendered expectation, and their constrained access to social resources; this, according to Torres (1998), induces stress from conflicts and pressures to modify gender characteristics, since African students must retain traditional masculine ideals.

Religion and sexuality

In this study, almost all participants were Christians, and one was Muslim. In African societies, religious norms provide guidance on behavior and attitudes towards certain forms of sexuality (Anarfi and Owusu 2011; Bochow and Van Dijk 2012; Tamale 2014; Kaoma 2016; Epprecht 2012). Participants perceptions regarding gender might be influenced by their religious traditions in their home countries. For instance, homosexuality is mostly rejected in African societies, perceived as immoral and as contradicting religious teachings (Epprecht 2012; Larkin 2020).

Religion contributes to stigma and negative attitudes towards certain forms of sexuality (Tamale 2014), and in the case of this study, African religious beliefs influence participants attitudes toward certain forms of sexuality at NAU.

Masculinity and health

In this study, masculinity varies by culture, race, class, religion, and age. Scholars have defined an ideal type of masculinity to which men in societies of the Global North are expected to adhere

(R. W. Connell 1985; 1998; Kimmel 2000; Lives 2000; R. W. Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Nayak and Kehily 2013; Bridges and Pascoe 2014; Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman 2017; Hearn and Howson 2019). This ideal type of masculinity stresses the need for boys to be socialized to avoid being like girls, and for boys to embody qualities such as confidence, self-reliance, financial success, and sexual prowess (Kimmel 2013; Hearn and Howson 2019). Traditional masculine ideology is perceived as this set of traits: risk-taking, being powerful and successful, adventurousness, self-reliance, toughness, and even violence (Kimmel 2013; Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman 2017).

Earlier research in masculinity indicates that conflicts between expectations and men's own performances or experiences of masculinity lead men to feel unworthy, incomplete, and inferior, and thus specifically relates to anger, anxiety, and stress that men experience in their lifetimes (Goffman 1963; Eisler, Skidmore, and Ward 1988). These earlier studies show that men who experience difficulties in living up to the standard of male roles experience negative outcomes, and mental health issues. O'Neil's 2008 study confirm this earlier assertion when he indicates that men who deviate from masculine ideology experience role conflict and strain. In a similar study, Brooks (2001) indicates that rigid male socialization negatively affects men's mental health and thus contributes to the dark side of masculinity, i.e., violent, and aggressive behaviors. Further in 1994, Chamaz establish the relationship between chronic illness and self-doubts about masculinity. Springer (2010) also reveal the connection between men's experiences of arthritis and their failure of meeting stressful male breadwinner expectations.

Courtenay (2000) emphasize that men are likely to adopt beliefs, behaviors, and practices that increase their risks, and are then less likely to engage in behaviors that are linked with health and

longevity. Earlier, Pleck in 1994 explain that men think and act in ways not because of their role identities of psychological traits, but rather because of their concepts of masculinity.

Thus, health-related beliefs and behaviors can similarly be understood as a means of constructing or demonstrating gender. In this way, the health behaviors and beliefs that people adopt simultaneously define and enact representations of gender (Courtenay 2000). According to Saltonstall (1993), health acts are social acts and can be seen as a form of practice which constructs the person in the same way that other social and cultural activities do. Courtenay (1998) elaborates that the social practices required for demonstrating masculinity are associated with different health advantages and risks.

In this study, gender is negotiated in part through relationships of power (Courtenay 2000). These power relationships are constituted in, among other practices, the practice of health behavior. From this premise, men use health beliefs and behaviors to demonstrate their masculine ideals, and these ideals establish them as men (Courtenay 2000). Kaufman (1994) explain that men's acquisition of power requires, for example, that men suppress their needs and refuse to admit to or acknowledge their pain. Further, Courtenay (2000) indicate that health related beliefs and behaviors that men use to demonstrate their masculinity include the denial of weakness or vulnerability, emotional and physical control, the appearance of being strong and robust, dismissal of any need for help, a ceaseless interest in sex, the display of aggressive behavior and physical dominance. In enacting masculine ideals with health behaviors, men reinforce cultural beliefs which posit that men are more powerful and less vulnerable than women; a man's body is structurally more efficient and superior; asking for help and caring for one's health is feminine;

and powerful and strong men are those for whom health and safety are irrelevant (Courtenay 2000).

Thus, regarding masculinity and men's health, this study assumes that dismissing their own health needs is part of the process of gender construction for African graduate students (Courtenay 2000).

Chapter Three: Methods

Methodology

Life of an International African Graduate Student at NAU

The experience of an international African graduate student can be both exciting and challenging. Drawing on my own experience and interactions with other international African students at NAU, my position as participant-observer, and a person of color in Flagstaff offered me a rich and in-depth perspective in understanding African masculinities. The biggest challenge for most international African students is adjusting to a new culture. Aside from the potential for language barriers, the culture at NAU is different from African cultures; this led to feelings of culture shock. The difficulty in communicating and interacting with others, coupled with NAU's academic expectations, affects African students' social life and connections and at times leads to isolation and exclusion. Although there exist opportunities to interact and build new relationships, African students tend to be comfortable around other African students since they believe they mostly share the same culture, ideology, and most importantly similar issues emanating from finances, limited access to financial aid, visa conditions, homesickness, isolation, and exclusion (Andrade 2006; Sherry, Thomas, and Chui 2010; Almurideef 2016). These issues typically make it easier for African students to build a sense of community among themselves, rather than building and fostering connections and relationships with American students.

Issues of race and discrimination are somewhat rare and did not come up in any of my interviews; however, feelings of isolation were frequent. Feelings of isolation basically result from cultural differences. Despite the numerous support systems available on campus for international

students, African students mostly resort to cultural associations in avenues of playing soccer, attending church, and communal cooking. These are positive experience for international African students and also provide opportunities for guidance and support in navigating US culture in general and academic culture specifically.

NAU Flagstaff Mountain Campus

This study was conducted in Flagstaff. Flagstaff is a city in the US state of Arizona, known for its mountains, desert, and ponderosa pine forests. As of 2020, the population of Flagstaff was a little over 73,000. Northern Arizona University (NAU) is in Flagstaff, and it is a public research university. NAU has a total enrollment of about 25,000 students, both undergraduate and graduate students. NAU, aside from being known for its research excellence, and several academic programs, harbors a wide range of international students from various continents including Africa. Changes in immigration policies, and international student visa regulations affect the number of enrollments for international students. Notwithstanding, there are over 1,000 international students currently enrolled at NAU. The exact number of international African student population on campus are unknown, however regular social gathering activities provide a rough estimate of about 30 students.

The African student population on campus mostly faces issues relating to language barriers, cultural differences, rising cost of living, housing, and most importantly, funding / financial support. Rising cost of living, housing, funding and financial support tend to burden most African graduate students, since this mostly emanates from their ineligibility to work outside campus or work for more than 20 hours per week on campus. Aside from these, African students are also

burdened with expectations, and in this study, these expectations relate to expectations of being a man and masculinity in the US.

This study recruited participants from NAU Flagstaff Mountain campus, and specifically sampled African students who are enrolled in a graduate degree seeking program, have successfully completed a semester in Flagstaff Mountain campus, are enrolled in an in-person program, immigrated to the US from Africa to study, have African descent or are African, and are between 20 and 45 years old.

In-depth, semi-structured interview

I adopted an in-depth, semi-structured interview approach. This allowed interviews to be conducted in a conversational manner with one participant at a time and afforded me the opportunity to blend open-ended questions with follow-up questions such as “how” and “why.” This approach also allowed the study to explore unforeseen themes.

On average, interviews lasted 50 minutes and were mostly conducted at participants apartments. In some instances, if requested by the participant, I decided on an interview location. All interviews were conducted in English, with only the participant and no other party or individual present. Prior to each interview, I either emailed or sent the study’s information sheet to participants; participants were encouraged to read the study’s information sheet before the interview. The study information sheet highlighted the overview of the study including objectives, methods, and risks. I also took the written consent of all participants, and all participants retained a copy of this consent. The research plan was approved by the NAU IRB on 11/23/2022.

In addition, prior to each interview, I contacted participants to ask whether they had read the study's information sheet, and whether they had any questions or concerns. Of all the 10 participants, none indicated that they did not understand the purpose of the study or wanted more information regarding the study information sheet. Interviews were conducted from November 24, 2022, to January 30, 2023.

Interview guide

Interviews were conversational; however, I developed an interview guide to follow. This afforded me some form of consistency in interviews. The guide included the following domains and questions:

Demographic characteristics

How old are you? What country in Africa are you from? Which ethnic group do you belong to, can you tell me more about it? How long have you been living in the US? Are you currently married/do you have a partner/living with a partner?

Family

Tell me about your family. Do you have any family members in the US? How would you describe your relationship with your family? What do you think your family expects from you? Do you have children/dependents you taking care of?

Masculinity

How do you identify yourself? What do you see as qualities of being a man? How will you describe being a man in the US and/or your home country/places you have lived? What is expected of you as a man in the US and/or your home country/places you have lived? Do you feel you fit these

norms of masculinity? Are there instances or situations where you feel more masculine or less masculine? Can you be a man and not conform to these norms of masculinity? Can you tell me about your experiences as an African student in NAU?

Informed consent

I sought the written consent of all participants before their participation in the study. I then sought the written consent of all participants to be audio recorded. All participants agreed to participate in this study, and to be audio recorded. Prior to each interview, I also stressed that their names will not be included, and if their names are somehow audio recorded, they would not be included in the study's transcripts and analysis. All audio recordings were saved on a Microsoft OneDrive folder linked to my NAU student's account and deleted from the recorder the same day of interview.

Transcription and analysis

Transcription of all interviews began immediately after each successful upload to Microsoft OneDrive folder. Transcription was done manually without the aid of any software. After each transcription, the document was saved to a different Microsoft OneDrive folder. After transcription, I cleaned all transcripts; here, audio recordings were played again while going through all transcripts to rectify any missing information, or correct anomalies and mistakes. I then assigned each participant a pseudonym: Bradley, Andrew, James, Stephen, Fred, Christopher, David, Gareth, Eric, and Matt. All transcripts were then uploaded to Atlas.ti and coded based on emergent themes.

Atlas.ti is a qualitative data analysis software which aids in analyzing data by ordering, structuring, retrieving, and visualizing (Smit 2002). In this study, analysis followed Strauss and Corbin's (1998) concept of data ordering and structuring guided by the study's objectives and research questions. Themes that emerged were grouped into codes:

- Age – Participant's current age.
- Before USA – Places participants have lived before moving to the US.
- Partner – Participant marital status.
- Dependent/Children – Participant's offspring (s) and/or dependent (s).
- Family USA/Elsewhere – Participant's family outside Africa and not spouse/partner/kid(s).
- Family expectations – Participant's family's expectations) of him.
- Qualities and experiences of being a man – Participant's experiences and perceptions of being a man.
- Experiences and perceptions of masculinity – Participant's experiences, perceptions, and understanding of masculinity.
- Conforming to masculinity – Participant's experiences and perceptions of conforming to or not conforming to masculinity.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality sought to follow NAU IRB's guidelines on human subject research and reduced any uncertainty surrounding participants use of information collected. As such, all audio

recordings were permanently deleted from audio recorder once they were successfully uploaded to Microsoft OneDrive folder which is linked to my NAU student account. All transcriptions were also uploaded to a different Microsoft OneDrive folder also linked to my student's account, and most importantly, no identifying information, unintentionally recorded, were included in the study's transcripts and analysis.

Positionality, challenges, and mitigation

Being an African student and having spent almost 2 years at NAU afforded me access to other African students fitting the study's recruitment criteria. Since there exists a small but well-connected population of African students at NAU, I approached those whom I believed fits the study's recruitment criteria. Considering the small population of African students at NAU and the study's recruitment criteria, it became difficult in recruiting from this target population since there were not enough African graduate students who met the study's criteria. This challenge necessitated the use of purposive sampling since this approach made it easier in targeting African students who fits the study's recruitment criteria. In all, 15 African students were recruited, and 10 were sampled. Although all 15 participants met the study's recruitment criteria and expressed their interests to be included in the study, 5 insisted on online zoom interviewing. These five were excluded since the study sought to conduct in-person interviews. In-person interviews were best suited since they aligned with the study's objective, research context, and preference of the research.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussions

Background of participants

Stephen is from Nigeria and identified himself as belonging to the Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria. The Yoruba are one of the largest ethnic groups south of the Sahara Desert in Africa (Bascom 1969). They are a collection of diverse people bound together by a common language, history, and culture. The Yoruba are mostly found in the western part of Nigeria (Lloyd 1965; Aderibigbe and Medine 2015) and are also scattered in groups in Benin and Togo (Omobola 2013). Although their exact numbers are difficult to obtain, they are estimated to number at least 5.3 million.

Stephen indicated that he is 32 years old, single and has no children, and has been living in the US for over six months. Stephen expressed that he has also lived in India and Ghana and explained his culture as: "we are religious, a lot of Christians, we are also Muslims. We are very integrated……religion is second to cultural identity." Omobola (2013) explains the Yoruba are religious people, and Christianity and Islam dominate their religious practices and beliefs, however, as many as 20% of the Yoruba still practice their traditional beliefs of their ancestors, and these practices vary from community to community (Oyebola 1980; Trager 2001).

Fred is also from Nigeria and is 25 years old. He also identified as Yoruba, and also indicated he is single and has no children. To Fred, "The Yoruba are the ones with flamboyant dress…. we are very good people, basically, I mean we are very kind, and we are very friendly……we are party people……we bring people together, we like celebrating, we are very joyous people." According to Ajila (2016), the Yoruba take pride in their attire and believes that clothes depict one's personality and social status. Clarke (2004) also explain that the Yoruba are very expressive

people who celebrate festivals and events with colorful attire, heavy rhythms, and advanced percussion. Fred further highlighted that he has been living in the US for over a year.

James is 30 years old and also from Nigeria. He is also single with no children and has lived in Germany and other parts of Europe. He explained he has been living in the US for over a year and identified as belonging to the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. The Igbo tribe are found in Gabon, Cameroun, and Equatorial Guinea, and are largely found in the eastern and western sections of the Niger river (Chuku 2018; Njoku 1990; Ogbuefi 2022). They are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, and their culture is largely influenced by colonization (Chuku 2018). The Igbo today are known as the ethnic group that has adopted Christianity the most in all of Africa (Ekwueme 1973).

Bradley is from Malawi, and he is 37 years old. He is married with two kids, and his wife and children are all living with him in the US. Bradley has been living in the US for over five years and has also lived in India for over two years. He identified as belonging to the Tonga tribe in Malawi. The Tonga are an ethnic group predominantly found in northern Malawi on the shores of Lake Malawi (Apthorpe 1964). The Tonga is a matrilineal society that is mostly Christian (Forster 1986).

Christopher is also from Malawi. He is 37 years old, divorced and has two children. Christopher explained that he has been living in the US for over four months and identified as belonging to the Chewa group of Malawi. Likewise, Matt, also from Malawi, identified as belonging to the Chewa. Matt, who is also 37 years old, married with one child, has also been living in the US for over four months. He explained that the Chewa is a matrilineal society with women having a special place in society. The Chewa are found in Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique (Phiri 2007).

The Chewa is an agricultural subsistence society (Morris and Msonthi 1996) and are believed to number 1.5 million people.

Andrew is 38 years old and from Zimbabwe. He identifies as belonging to the Zezuru tribe of Zimbabwe and speaks Shona. According to Matiure (2012), the Zezuru people are native to Southern Africa, and are mostly found in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa. They are mostly known for growing sorghum, beans, African groundnuts, and largely keep cattle and goats (Mukwada 2018). Today, about 60% - 80% follow Christianity, with a small number practicing Islam and Judaism (Kwenda 2003; Shoko 2013). Andrew has been living in the US for over four months, and also explained that he has lived in South Africa, Brazil, Botswana, and Zambia. He is married with three children.

David is from Ghana; he is 29 years old. He is single with no kids and explained that he belongs to the Akuapem group of the Akan tribe in Ghana. David has been living in the US for over a year and has also lived in Togo. The Akuapem are one of the main ethnic groups of the Akan people of Ghana, and mostly reside in the southeastern part of Ghana (Olson 1996). According to Ayesu (2013), the Akuapem are noted for their Odwira festival which is celebrated to mark the victory of the historic win over the 'Ashanti' and to cleanse themselves and ask the gods for protection.

Gareth is also from Ghana and is 29 years old. He is single with no kids and previously lived in Italy for over a year. He has been living in the US for over a year and explained that he belongs to the Gurma group of Ghana. According to Bodomo (1994), the Gurma are mainly in Northeastern Ghana, Burkina Faso, and in the northern areas of Togo, and Benin, and also southwestern Niger.

Eric is 41 years old and also from Ghana. He explained he belongs to the Krobo ethnic group in Ghana and has been living in the US for over a year. He further indicated that he has lived in most parts of Europe specifically Germany, Malta, Hungary, and Portugal. He is married with one child. According to Boakye (2010), the Krobo of Ghana are mostly found in the eastern part of Ghana, and they are the most numerous of the Ga-Adangme speaking group in Ghana. Boakye (2010) further explain that the Krobo are noted for their rite of passage celebration, dipo, which is celebrated for social and religious aspects in addition to cleansing young girls to womanhood.

Overview of participants perceptions of masculinity

This section summarizes participants perceptions and understanding of expectations of being a man and masculinity.

Participants perceptions of the gendered roles of being a man in their home countries and the US reflect the idea that masculinity is socially constructed (West and Zimmerman 1987; Michael 1994; Pleck 1995; Trager 2001; Uchendu 2007; Salamone 2006; Ratele 2006; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009; Tamale 2011; Odimegwu, Pallikadavath, and Adedini 2013; Nayak and Kehily 2013; Tamale 2014; Ratele 2014b; Rogers, Sperry, and Levant 2015; Smith 2017; Pasura and Christou 2018; Mfecane 2018; Olanrewaju et al. 2019). Further, their mechanisms in overcoming their challenges of masculinity indicate that masculinity is rooted in cultural and social factors, and the need to adjust to new forms of masculinity that highlight inclusiveness (Brod and Kaufman 1994; Courtenay 2000; Addis and Mahalik 2003; Anderson 2010; Anarfi and Owusu 2011; Butler 2011; Connell 2020).

Participants perceived the male genitalia as one of the primary features in defining a man. The male genitalia were also indicative in participants understanding of expectations of being a man. This belief, that is, the power of the penis and constructions of masculinity, encapsulated participants understanding of being a man and masculinity. Perceptions of expectations of being a man and masculinity included responsibilities, financial obligations, provision, leadership, care, strength, respect, emotional restriction, head of family / household, and marriage. These perceptions correlated to being in charge, power, and superiority. Participants perceived these perceptions as exerting pressure on them. However, according to participants, these pressures cement their identities as men, and in performing these pressures, participants meet their expectations of being a man, and exhibit their masculinity.

Participants perceptions of the challenges of exhibiting their masculinity at NAU reflected the study's concepts of shared responsibility, and gender independence. Shared responsibility in this study was conceptualized to indicate women's economic or financial responsibilities in the family because of economic opportunities available to women. Shared responsibility was closely linked to the concept of relieving pressure – the idea of shared economic responsibility between the man and woman. The idea of shared responsibility and relieving pressure also threatened participants masculinity, and challenged their constructions of being in charge, power, and superiority. On the other hand, gender independence illustrated gender identity and gender expression which differs from what others (participants) expect of assigned sex and was closely linked to sexual attraction toward the same sex. This was key in participants expectations of being a man in US, and initiates participants negotiation mechanism – respect.

In overcoming these challenges, henceforth negotiating masculinity, participants adopt a stance that we characterize as one of respect and avoiding interactions. Respect, in this study, is the idea of consciously negotiating and embracing new masculine identities dominant in NAU. Avoiding interaction is the notion of upholding traditional masculinity in actions or behaviors of separation, such that power is exerted. To participants, traditional masculinity is important, and supersedes other forms of masculinity.

The process of negotiating their masculinity at NAU affects participants interactions and associations with others, and in this study, this was conceptualized as cultural association: the feeling of community among participants with similar ideologies of expectations of being a man, masculinity, patriarchy, responsibility, and family, which is mostly expressed among others who share similar cultural values.

Understanding masculinity

This section discusses how participants perceive themselves and their understanding of masculinity. It explores the following themes: power of the male genitalia, being in charge, and emotional restriction.

Power of the male genitalia

In this study, participants perceived the male genitalia as a marker of masculinity and believed the male genitalia to be the bases of what delineate a man, expectations of being a man, and masculinity. Participants perceptions of the male genitalia and masculinity encapsulated their understanding of gender, and interactions with their society.

Studies have shown the relationship between the male genitalia and constructions of masculinity. For instance, Gavey and McPhilips (1999) explain the relationship between the male genitalia and male sexual power. Although their study focused on condom use, their concept of the male genitalia reflected cultural constructions of masculinity and power. Bowleg et al. (2011) study of masculinity among black heterosexual men drew the relationship between cultural constructions of masculinity and men's sexual behavior; Kimmel (2000) and Bassett (2007) discuss the power of the male genitalia and how it is perceived as an image of dominance. Connell (1995) provide a comprehensive analysis in which the male genitalia is symbolized to demonstrate masculinity; Stephen (2007), and Hammond and Overall (2018) explain how the male genitalia is associated to dominance, and aggression. Sandberg (2014) also explain the association between greater dominance, masculinity, and the male genitalia.

Sex in this study simply refers to the differences between males and females, specifically, differences in reproductive organs. Gender, on the other hand refers to the cultural and societal expectations of men, thence, relating to masculine traits. Thus, in this study, gendered behavior is determined by cultural and social expectations, shaping participants gender roles.

Participants responses reflecting this theme are highlighted in the following section and discussed further.

Stephen's understanding of what constituted a man stressed the male genitalia:

> "Is biological. You don't need to do any special thing; is how you came from your mother's womb. From my mother's womb, I carried that manliness. The penis came out, so I think that's what makes me a man. Yeah, I think it's from there that every other thing formed up, you know."

Stephen's perception of defining a man emphasized the male genitalia. Uchendu's (2007) study of masculinity in Nigeria illustrated that the male genitalia are one feature that makes a whole lot of difference, and among Nigeria men, this feature is crucial in defining one's quality as a man.

Likewise, Fred's perception of who a man is also stressed the male genitalia:

> "I mean there are qualities that makes a man a man. When God created the world, he created a man with features, you know. This distinguishes a man from a woman, and I have those features. I mean the biological features. So, if we go with biological features, there are biological features that men have that makes them to perform and be a man."

In Fred's understanding, the male genitalia do not only define one as a man but also makes one to perform as a man.

Bradley understood a man as:

> "I see myself as a man because I was born a man and I have a masculine body. I think all that physique like weightlifting, all the sexual features I have which are different from women. Those to me makes me to be identified differently from a woman."

Likewise, Bradley's explanation of a man highlighted the male genitalia and physical strength, and to him, this identifies a man from a woman. The understanding of physical strength is closely related to machismo in Latin American cultures. Machismo is a cultural construct which prioritizes traditional male behaviors like dominance, aggression, and control as foundational in a man's attribute (Hardin 2002). Gutmann and Vigoya (2005) conceptualize machismo in relation to positions of power and influence. Also, Gutmann (2006) argues that machismo is deeply rooted in cultural institutions, thence not a matter of individual attitude or behavior. According to Uchendu (2007) and Lambo (2005) physical strength is an important representation of masculinity among men in Nigeria.

Andrew explained who a man is solely based on the male genitalia:

> "I have a penis and testicles which produce some testis……For me being a man is biology."

David from Ghana explained who a man is as:

> "This is how I was born, and I was assigned a male at birth. And growing up, I've seen that I have features that a male should possess, like a male organ and all that. And I also use he/his/him and all that so I think I possess all the features that a man should have. So, I do identify as a man……. I believe, first of all, you should have like a male organ like the penis."

David's understanding of a man stressed the male genitalia and male pronouns. According to Wagner (2004), male pronouns are used to refer to male individuals and include words such as "he", "him", "his", and "himself". In this study, participants perceived male pronouns to indicate and reinforce their gender and masculinity.

Eric shared that a man is:

> "I don't have technical terms in explaining who a man is, but I believe that I have a man genitalia. I am built that way naturally, so I consider myself as a man. I'm not attracted to another man, which mean I am attracted to the opposite sex. This makes me feel that yeah, I'm a man."

Eric also stressed the male genitalia and indicated attraction toward the female/woman as what constitutes a man. Heterosexuality is associated with masculinity in many cultures (Frank 1987; Ratele 2006; Anderson 2008; Horton and Rydstrom 2011; Jewkes and Morrell 2010; Ratele 2014b; Beasley 2015; Mkhize and Njawala 2016). Butler (1990; 2003; 2011) argues that heterosexuality is a social construct that reinforces gender norms and roles in society. Butler explains that men asset their masculinity by avoiding perceptions of homosexuality, and anything perceived as feminine.

Being in charge

Connell argues that masculinity is closely linked to power and dominance, and this is associated with the desire for control (Connell 2005; 2020). Kimmel (2013) broadened Connell's concept and

explain that men tend to feel threatened when traditional forms of masculinity are not performed, and for this reason, men losses their power and status. Hearn and Howson (2019) argue that traditional forms of masculinity limit opportunities for women. Glick et al. (2015) explain that traditional gender norms associate women with dependence and weakness.

Traditional masculinity in this study is as a set of beliefs and values that reinforces gender hierarchies and limit opportunities for women. They include being a breadwinner, head of family/household, and responsibilities. Traditional masculinity is not perceived as being harmful; rather, it reinforces traditional gender norms, and is perceived as a means of achieving success (Kimmel 2013; Hearn and Howson 2019; Glick, Wilkerson, and Cuffe 2015).

Participants perceptions of being in charge comprised being breadwinners, head of family/household, and bearing responsibilities. According to Jaiyeola (2020), these are understood as signs of superiority, Rothman (2016) explain that responsibilities is linked to the idea that men are naturally suited for positions of power and authority.

Being in charge mostly related to participants expectations of being a man. The following section highlights participants responses reflecting this theme:

With Fred, expectations of being a man were:

> "For Nigeria, as a man, I'm expected to be a leader, as a man, I'm expected to be an example, as a man, I'm expected to be a shield, as a man, I'm expected to be a protector, as a man, I'm expected to be someone that can I mean, take responsibilities, as a man, I'm expected to be fearless basically. I mean some of us are fearful, but then as a man, I'm expected to be a care giver as well. Those are the expectations in Nigeria."

Fred then elaborated his expectations of being a man drawing on his expectations of being a man in his family:

> "There is a certain level of responsibility that you inherit you know and em. Yeah, so they expect so much from me, I believe they are looking up to me basically, I mean to take up the responsibility. I have to be in charge of the family, take care of my younger brother and take care of them as well [parents]."

According to Smith (2017), indications of maleness in Nigerian societies involve providing for the family, providing for dependents within and outside one's extended family, protecting the weak and society from danger at risk to one's life and wellbeing. Fred's explanation highlighted responsibilities, provision, leadership, and care. These reflected the study's theme of being in charge.

The expectation of a man to take charge to exercise power have been investigated by Lowell (1996), Maurer and Pleck (2006), and Coughlin and Wade (2012). Uchendu (2007) explain that among Nigeria culture groups, differences in gender allows men more power and superiority, and these are indicated in diverse forms. In this study, being in charge puts pressure on men. Pressure in this study cements participants identities as men, and in performing these pressures, participants meet their expectations of being a man.

Regarding his explanation of exhibiting his masculinity, Fred's perception reflected the idea of pressure:

> "When you think of some of the responsibilities men have, sometimes it could be quite overwhelming. You need to be able to live up to those expectations of you. You just have to work hard."

Fred's emphasis of "you need to be able to live up to those expectations of you" reflects pressure.

Stephen shared expectations of being a man stressing financial obligations:

> "In Nigeria and Ghana. There's pressure on you, you've to prove, you know is financial obligations, even with family, you understand [in Nigeria and Ghana] there's pressure, they

expect you to do things, they expect you to have money. You need to be a man enough, and most times is financial."

He further explained that:

"My honest opinion, there's less pressure on a man in the US. There's less pressure, I will be honest with you, yeah, there's less pressure. In fact, when I meet ladies here [in the US], I feel less pressured to prove anything. In the US, ladies do stuff for themselves even surprisingly, those ladies, African ladies that you meet there [in Nigeria and Ghana], when you meet them here [in the US], they have adjusted. This thing is so strange, you know, because you will wonder these are the same ladies that you meet over there that are pressuring your life [in Nigeria and Ghana], but when you meet them here [in the US], is a bit soft. So, I think is the society here [in the US], and also because here I think the reason why ladies are like that is because they have access to funds, to money. So, here in America, there's less pressure on me being a man, you know, we're all products of our society, is like we're so conditioned to that pressure in Africa."

Pressure, as explained in this study, is indicative in Stephen's explanation. To Stephen, pressure does not only relate to family, but also prospective sexual/romantic partners. The expectation to fulfill financial obligations (i.e., pressure) cements Stephen's identity as a man. His emphasis of his identity as a man being threatened in the US stems from his indication of the lack of pressure from women in the US.

Stephen then explained masculinity as:

"I think masculinity is economics and culture, is about, the income, the jobs available to women. I feel in America because is more developed, there are opportunities than other places, women are able to provide for the family and once you are able to provide, you know, power and finance go together, once you are able to provide with your husband, there's that shared power, shared sense of responsibility. In my place, is not like that, masculinity is more pronounced in Africa, and the reason is because women are not as rich. I don't think is about culture, is about money. The entire idea of masculinity stems from the fact that men are the providers and when men stop providing, being the sole provider, then masculinity is threatened. You know power flows with money."

Stephen's understanding of masculinity related to the idea of power and money and reflected the study's theme of being in charge. With him, providing for the family or breadwinning exhibits

his masculinity, and this exerts power over women. Maurer and Pleck (2006) explain that breadwinning is attributed to masculinity. Coughlin and Wade (2012) establish the relationship between masculinity, power, and money. Lowell (1996) indicate the relationship between higher income and the feeling of less restriction among men in romantic/sexual relationships or marriages and reported that men have greater power when they earned more.

Stephen's perception of power and money was also indicative in his understanding of masculinity in the US:

> "Being in the US is making me lose some masculinity or something. Actually now, I'm starting to question my sense of masculinity because I attach it to the desire to be a provider. But that identity of that masculinity, it is pecked in America, because now, the woman has leverage, you are both bringing stuff to the table. So, now, I think as an African man in US, you just need to strive to bring more, to make you feel more like a man now. I really believe masculinity is attached to being a provider, you know, so once you are not the sole provider, I think you are less of a man culturally, you will feel less of a man as an African in the US."

To Stephen, women providing in the family challenges his masculinity in the US. This stems from the idea of shared responsibility. However, shared responsibility challenges Stephen's masculinity in the US. His indication of "masculinity, it is pecked in America" clearly illustrates his challenges in exhibiting his masculinity in the US.

Christopher understood a man as providing for the family:

> "According to where I'm coming from [Malawi], according to my culture that I was raised in, we believe that a man provides everything for the family. And we don't force women to provide for the family. So, it is the responsibility of a man to provide for the family, the belief of a man being the sole breadwinner, it is now, changing. Because women in Malawi, they are advancing, they are getting jobs. So, this kind of responsibility is now shared between the two, a woman can play a role in providing for the family."

Christopher's understanding of being a man in Malawi echoes Fred's expectations of being a man in Nigeria – responsibilities, and provision. According to Aid (2016), most societies in Malawi are

matrilineal, however, patriarchy is the structure, conduct, and mechanism of societies. In this study, patriarchy is when men are perceived as heads of households and have more power and authority than women. Patriarchy is closely linked to the theme of being in charge.

In Christopher's understanding, providing for the family, and the expectation of being a sole provider cements his identity as a man. Christopher's explanation also highlighted the idea of women, economic opportunities, and changing roles. According to Masanjala (2006) and Mucavele (2013), women involved economic activities in Malawi are able to support their families, and in the face of economic challenges, this creates a sense of security in the family.

In Christopher's understanding, shared responsibility creates changing roles and expectations of being a man in Malawi. The concept of shared responsibility is closely linked to the idea of relieving pressure – relieving pressure in this study is a consequence of shared responsibility and encompasses the idea of shared economic responsibility between the man and woman.

However, Christopher's statement "we don't force women to provide for the family" illustrates a more elaborative expectation of women. He explained this as:

> "Now, we have this development, we find women changing, improving their lives, getting good jobs, making lots of money, but because of this attitude that is coming from our culture, you find out that men are still holding the responsibility in the family, they are still being the sole breadwinners. So, like in Malawi, you find that in the family, both work, but they still have that [cultural expectations of being a man], in which the man is still paying rent, is still buying food in the home, and the woman is still demanding support from the man to support her family and all that."

Christopher's explanation here shows how the concept of shared responsibility can be shaped by cultural norms. In Christopher's understanding, women and shared responsibility may face challenges due to gendered expectations in Malawi. According to Adolfsson and Madsen (2020),

women who are providers in Malawi face significant challenges, and these challenges are mostly rooted in gendered expectations. Further, according to Eissler et al. (2022), challenges emanating from being a provider among women in Malawi creates stigma and discriminatory behavior towards women because of differing gendered roles.

Christopher understood masculinity based on the concepts of responsibilities, provision, and breadwinning. These concepts have been explained as exerting pressure on participants:

> "To me, I understand masculinity in the sense of like having a man as the breadwinner in the family."

Christopher then shared that:

> "Sometimes, I feel stressed up because of demand that comes from my family. So, like, they expect more from me, or they ask more from me, yet, I don't have resources that could meet their demands. So, I feel stressed up with the, the, their demands. But sometimes, it's like, when I fulfill all their demands, or not all, but even like, some of them, I feel relieved. So, it's like more pressure is coming from my family because they expect more from me."

In Christopher's ideology, the concept of relieving pressure being closely related to the concept of shared responsibility, is idealized in his explanation to include meeting expectations/pressure. Thus, to him, meeting expectations relieves pressure, and relieving pressure from here onwards, is broadened not only to include the idea of shared responsibility between the man and woman, but also, meeting expectations of breadwinning/provision.

James understanding of expectations of being a man reflected how he exhibited his masculinity:

> "There have been instances where I felt like oh, I'm the guy, I'm the man, because I'm naturally built. There are times where you tend to go to club and you try to dominate, prove that okay, I'm the man, I'm talking and you must listen, things like that. So, like I fell that's the superiority of being a man and not only because of the advantage of my body size or my height. Being a man sometimes cannot necessarily be attributed to you being masculine. In Africa, being a man is being the head of the family, putting things in place. I don't feel less of a man now, working out is even a plus.

[Interviewer] You made mention of something, you said being 'guy'. What do you mean by that?

Guy is like taking in charge, letting them know okay you are the man, you are this guy, and you stand by this authority regardless of what is happening. I'm the man and am commanding you to do this, or I'm telling you respectfully to do this, and you must obey. So, like taking in charge, guy is just like a street slang of like identifying guys or men."

James' understanding of exhibiting his masculinity stresses being in charge. However, with James, this is mostly exhibited through the concept of physical strength. With him, physical strength does not only demonstrate being in charge, but also responsibilities, head of family/household, and provision.

Bradley's understanding of expectations of being a man reflected responsibilities, and provision:

"In Malawi, being a man means you have a responsibility to look after your home……you don't have an option between the man and the woman. I can say that in Malawi, what is being expected of a man is about responsibility."

Regarding expectations of being a man, Andrew explained that:

"In Zimbabwe, my community is still patriarchal, and so we expect that men should be responsible, we expect that men should be the provider, we expect that men should get jobs that can bring enough income home."

Andrew's explanation highlights the close relationship between patriarchy, responsibilities, provision. In this study, responsibilities and provision have been explained to exert pressure on men, pressure has been explained to cement participants identities as men.

However, Andrew's perception of being a man in the US reflected the idea of relieving pressure:

"In the US is a bit different, but it seems the women are a bit more independent and therefore maybe reduces that kind of pressure on men."

Relieving pressure is closely linked to shared responsibility, and relieving pressure is a consequence of shared responsibility, Andrew's understanding of being a man in the US clearly reflected this idea.

David's expectations of being a man stressed responsibilities, head of family, marriage, and protection:

> "As a man from African culture, you are seen as the head of the family, you need to fend for your kids, your wife and all that. As a man on a daily basis, I think about all that, how to put myself together to start a family, take care of my wife and kids and all that; have a family of my own, you know. In Ghanaian traditional societies, a lot is expected of a man, you know. Being the head of the family, you have a lot of responsibilities to ensure taking care of the home, protecting your family against any harm either spiritual or physical. A lot of expectations, I should say."

Responsibilities as reiterated by other participants was also key in David's expectations of being a man. David also stressed marriage in his explanation. In many African societies, being responsible is doing masculinity and in areas of being head of households, men attract social advantages, and at times, economic advantages (Uchendu 2007). The cultural connection among participants of a man having a family composed of at least a wife and children was emphasized here. In this study, participants perceived marriage to exhibit masculinity. Marriage is an important social condition in many African societies (Uchendu 2007; Smith 2017). Participants perceptions of marriage demonstrate precondition for leadership potentials.

David's emphasis of physical and spiritual protection is an important aspect that is valued in many African societies (Mattis et al. 2006; Knoetze 2019). Participants perceived protection as measures taken to prevent harm and practices that maintain peace and resilience in face of adversity.

David then explained masculinity based on the concepts of patriarchy and responsibilities:

> "Masculinity, though, we have a strict definition, in my lay terms, I'll say it has to do with mostly patriarchal societies. Societies where men are supposed to be dominant and all that and assume the largest share of responsibility in society. So, anything that has to do with a man, being the greater part of, that's my understanding of masculinity."

David then explained that:

> "I'm not the type that would want to impose my masculinity, perhaps if I should have a wife. So, her ideas and opinions also matter, but I still believe that the man should be the head of the family and take concrete decision sometimes. You also have to factor in the views of your partner."

With David, the concepts of patriarchy and responsibilities explained as being in charge, does not automatically enforce/impose power. His explanation indicates the idea that although his understanding of masculinity imposes power over women, he would however employ approaches of partnership in decision-making. This reflects the idea of shared responsibility.

Gareth also understood a man as:

> "So, in my culture, a man is someone who form his own family with a woman, take control of the family, be in charge, and take responsibility of his family. Not only his family, but also the community as a whole."

Gareth understanding also stressed responsibilities and marriage.

Regarding masculinity, Gareth's responses highlighted family, responsibilities, and provision:

> "If someone mentions masculinity, for me, I understand it for being a man. Being a man and you playing your man role because if being a man is, you know, setting your own family. For me, if you are able to do this, have your own family and be responsible, that's masculinity, you know."

Gareth's understanding of masculinity also stressed Christopher's and Matt's understanding of relieving pressure – meeting demands relieves pressure:

> "If there's a problem and I couldn't solve it, then it means am not being responsible. So, at that time, you will feel not being a man. But if there's a problem, and you the man, you are able to solve it, any problem, assuming, you are having a family, and there are responsibilities, and you are able to solve it, then you are playing your masculinity role. But if you fail to do it, then at that time, you are not playing your masculinity role."

Eric's expectations of being a man also reflected responsibilities, leadership, and provision:

> "A man is supposed to, kind of lead, a man is supposed to lead, a man should be responsible for others, a man is supposed to provide, a man is supposed to take the shot when the need arises. In my local dialect, we say, it is the man that stands in front of a gun to take the shot. So, these are the qualities of a man that I see, you should be able to stand and provide, work hard, make sure people are comfortable around you."

Eric's explanation of masculinity denoted the idea of hypermasculinity:

> "In the US, being able to stand and do things and lead people, I think that the challenge is that it is seen differently, like you are becoming an oppressor or something. So, if you always would see, a man as somebody who is an oppressor, then you are even killing that manliness in that person."

Hypermasculinity in this study illustrates masculine traits that differs in a given cultural context, restrictive in terms of being traditional in a different cultural context. Hypermasculinity in this study is linked to the study's theme of being in charge.

With Matt, masculinity was:

> "I know here definition of man is kind like crooked or something. I don't know how we can define it. You have to build yourself, there are things that you do to others regardless of who they are because you are a man. You treat them as human beings and they also appreciate that you are there for them. You know, I always say em there are some people who will grow as boys even if they are sixty or they are seventy, but there are some males who grow as men even at ten years because of how they're reacting to different things, how they describe their world and how they accommodate others into their world. You can literally see how people behave in a situation. Some would want to be alone when something comes by, like a fierce thing such as a lion coming in and how do we react. Some would run away and never consider their children or their wives, but some will try to give themselves up, to protect others, not that they asked you to, but we just feel being responsible to take up that job."

Matt understanding of masculinity reflected the concepts of leadership, respect, care, and protection. Matt's additional explanation of masculinity also reflected the study's concept of relieving pressure:

> "You know, I feel good to be responsible, I mean to reach out, I mean to help others. The only challenge I have right now is I'm not capable in terms of what others need, if I cannot manage to provide for them, you know I feel as if I have done nothing. I wish I could have everything. When somebody says I this; I should be able available and provide for them."

Thus, with Matt, being able to meet expectations cements his identity as a man and affords him the avenue to exhibit his masculinity.

Emotional restriction

Levant (1996) explains that emotional restriction is a traditional masculinity norm which tends to be harmful and can lead to depression, anxiety, and suicide, as well as difficulties in expressing intimacy and connection. Wong et al. (2005) also explain that traditional masculinity norms have the potential to limit emotional expressions in men, and this affects men's intimate relationships. Addis and Mahalik (2003) indicate that emotional restriction is a barrier to help-seeking behavior in men, since traditional masculine norms view help-seeking behavior as feminine, and a sign of weakness.

Emotional restriction constitutes traditional masculinity, and in this study, participants perceived avoiding emotions as perceptions of being a man and masculinity. Participants also perceived emotional restriction both as being constructive in terms of being strong, and harmful since it impeded their access to help-seeking behaviors.

The following quotes discusses this theme in broader detail:

Matt explained expectations of being a man as:

> "Being a man in Malawi is uh being a man of value. So, uh largely is to be strong in terms of emotional, to be strong in terms of how you're making decisions."

Among participants, emotional restriction denotes strength, and in Matt's understanding, this forms part of what defines one as a man.

Matt then elaborated how the concept of emotional restriction challenges his masculinity:

> "You have emotions. So, uh, mentally you can be affected. But the challenging part of it is that in Africa, men are believed to be so strong, regardless. In the end, you would find that you're alone, you're lonely even in a family where everybody is available physically. But emotionally, mentally, you're just alone. Sometimes, sharing your challenges with a few friends, they will not listen to you, or they may tell you that you are a man, and you have to be strong."

The concept of emotional restriction affects Matt's interactions with others, and although a challenge, Matt also perceived emotional restriction as a means of negotiating his masculinity.

James understanding of expectations of being a man highlighted the concept of emotional restriction:

> "In Africa and Nigeria per se, they expect a man to be a carrier, and what do I mean by a carrier – being very strong in terms of emotions. Especially in Africa, they tend to make the statement that men don't cry, men don't do this, men don't do that. They just kind of want you to be strong. In Africa, they expect a lot from you as being a man, you have to be strong physically, emotionally."

In this study, emotional restriction is perceived as the lack of emotional expression to affirm self-reliance, dominance, and prestige. James's indication of showing strength (i.e., emotional restriction) cements his expectations of being a man. According to Sattel (1983), dominance among men take shape in various positions through institutions of power including restraining emotions.

Norms of USA masculinity

This section discusses participants understanding of norms of US masculinity.

Shared responsibility

Shared responsibility challenges traditional forms of masculinity (Kimmel 2019; Peukert 2019) since it undermines gender norms and expectations (Hearn and Howson 2019). Kimmel (2019) explain that traditional forms of masculinity are appealing to men since they emphasize power, dominance, and control. Thus, relationships with women who assert their independence and equality challenge men, destabilizing their masculinity. To Peukert (2019), gender is not fixed, but instead shaped by social and cultural factors; for this reason, changes that challenge traditional gender norms threaten individuals' identity, and adversely have profound effects on oneself. Connell (2005) likewise argue that traditional forms of masculinity are challenged by social changes including increasing participation of women and shared responsibility in the household.

In this study, participants perceptions of masculinity encompassed behaviors associated with being a man and denoted the ideology of traditional masculinity and being in charge. Shared responsibility challenges participants perceptions of masculinity since masculinity was mostly perceived as the state of self-reliance. Shared responsibility, which according to participants, relieves pressure, also threatens masculinity.

The following section discusses this theme:

Regarding expectations of being a man in the US, Christopher explained that:

> "Yeah. I see that there's quite a difference in terms of like, the subject which we are discussing, because here [in the US], women, they are more advanced than the women in Africa. In Africa it's just a small percent of the women who are able to, to earn money, who are able to work and earn money, very few. But here almost 90, or over 90% of women are able to make money [in the US]. So, it is quite different. And even the culture here, it's different [in the US]. The culture here, like people don't believe in, in having one person to be the breadwinner of the family, they both participate in the family [in the US]. They make equal, like, equal contributions towards the affairs of the family. So, it's kind of different. There's that difference between a man in Africa, especially in Malawi, and a man in the US."

Christopher's explanation of being a man in the US reflected shared responsibility. Likewise, Andrew's perception of being a man in the US stressed shared responsibility:

> "In the US is a bit different, but it seems the women are a bit more independent and therefore maybe reduces that kind of pressure on men."

This study earlier conceptualized that the idea of relieving pressure is closely linked to the concept of shared responsibility, and relieving pressure is a consequence of shared responsibility.

Also, David stressed the idea of shared responsibility in the US:

> "But it's quite different in the US, you know, I should say like a 50/50 thing here. It is kind of balanced here. There are homes in the US that really don't even have a clear structure as to who is the head of the family, but it is not the same in African society, whether the man is rich or not, he's still the head of the family. It's not the same in the US, for the most part that I've been here. You know, a woman could be paying the bill whilst the man is at the home taking care of the kids, you will hardly see that in African societies."

Further, David, Stephen, Eric, Gareth and Matt explanations reflected shared responsibility in the US, and most of their responses also related to relieving pressure. However, much of their understanding on shared responsibility reflected Stephen's idea of 'pecked masculinity'. To Stephen, women contributing equally as men challenges him in exercising his masculinity in the US. The inverse relationship between shared responsibility and being in charge have been explored by scholars, and conceptualized as changes that challenge traditional norms of

masculinity and affecting individuals' sense of self and identity (Connell 2005; Kimmel 2019; Peukert 2019; Hearn and Howson 2019).

Gender and sexuality

Connell (2001; 2020) has explain that traditional forms of masculinity are built on heterosexuality, and men in asserting their masculinity, reject homosexuality since they perceive it as a form of femininity. Kimmel (2017) establish the relationship between masculinity and homophobia and explained that men reject homosexuality as means of demonstrating their masculinity. Herek (1986) explain that the rejection of homosexuality as a form of exhibiting one's masculinity have negative impacts for homosexual men, since this affects not only their interactions but also their mental wellbeing.

In this study, participants expressed the idea of gender independence. This was perceived as gender identity and gender expression which differed from participants expectations of assigned sex. The subsequent section discusses this theme.

To James, expectations of a man in the US were:

> "In the US like sometimes, even when you see a man and you try to identify the person as a man, they might be angry; in my job, you don't refer to people as he/him because you don't know who that person is. They might dress like a man, but they are not addressed as men. So, we tend to go with they/them, and things like that. So, I think that's the difference I've seen in the US, like you don't want to offend anyone, by classifying that person under that category of being a man even seeing the person like dressing like a man or talking like a man, you just want to be saved because of this gender thing in the US. In the US, you have to be very careful who you are classifying as a man, you don't want to be gender bias and things like that in the US, because they tend to take these things really serious."

James's explanation reflects gender independence. Likewise, Bradley explained expectations of being a man in the US as:

> "For US, I can say the sexual orientation is build up in the system whereby you can choose to be identified with what you want, I can be a woman, or I can choose to be transgender if I want. So, a woman can be head of the family, my wife can be head of the family in the US. There's much independence in terms of gender."

Bradley's emphasis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and traditional gender roles reflects gender independence and shared responsibility. James earlier explained that gender independence is what is expected of a man in NAU. However, with Bradley, gender independence seems to be related to shared responsibility. In Bradley's understanding, the connection between gender independence and shared responsibility is choice.

Bradley then elaborated the differences between expectations of being a man in Malawi, and expectations of being a man in the US:

> "In the US, children or boys are being trained for independence. I should say the sense of belonging is not like 10/10, or in Malawi whereby you belong home. In the US, you don't belong at home. Home is a temporary place."

Bradley's explanation here denotes the idea of independence. Independence in this study illustrates the freedom in making decisions, and freedom from being coerced or influenced by cultural norms and expectations. To Bradley, what distinguishes expectations of being a man in Malawi, and expectations of being a man in the US rests on independence. His illustration of utilizing home in defining this concept stresses the emphasis of family in his expectations of being a man. Perhaps in his ideology, Bradley's statement here could also mean that in Malawi, there is no independence in the family. Likewise, Christopher, who is also from Malawi, stressed responsibilities and provision as expectations of being a man in Malawi.

James's explanation also reflected gender independence, however, with him, this was perceived as a challenge:

> "When I came to the US, I had to read a lot of articles about gender. I was treading very carefully because I didn't want to step on anyone's toes like trying to identify one as a man whereas the person themselves does not identify as such. You trying to be cautious of not offending anyone is really kind of draining in a way. If I see a man, em, I'd rather say hey than try to classify because I want to tread carefully, just not to offend anyone. Because that can also be very dangerous in terms of their own mental health according to how they want themselves to be identified."

Negotiating masculinity

This section discusses responses / coping mechanisms participants adopt in negotiating their masculinity.

Respect for cultural differences

Connell (2001; 2020) explains the power of acknowledging cultural differences in navigating one's masculinity. To him, respecting cultural differences in a new cultural context serves as means of negotiating and overcoming challenges of traditional forms of masculinity (Connell 2001; 2020). Kimmel (2017; 2019) suggest that respecting cultural differences promotes a more inclusive form of masculinity which in necessary for men in new environments. Similar studies have emphasized the need for cultural negotiation approaches in fostering strength and promoting diverse forms of masculinity geared toward development and well-being (Walsh 2011; Lerner et al. 2013; Sanders et al. 2015). Wong et al. (2017) emphasize that respecting cultural differences is key in shaping the impact of masculinity on mental health and suggested the need to respect cultural differences in navigating masculinity to overcoming challenges of depression, and anxiety. Patterson and Elliot (2002) explain that adherence to traditional masculine norms can negatively affect one's well-being, specifically, if one is in a different cultural context where specific norms are expected. To them, respect for cultural differences is a suitable approach since

it affords a more flexible and inclusive form of masculinity and supports one's positive identity and mental health (Patterson and Elliott 2002).

Respect for cultural differences was employed by participants as a way of negotiating their masculinity. This idea highlights the importance of recognizing the diversity and complexity of masculinity across different cultures, and in this study, this was perceived as promoting a more inclusive form of masculinity that has positive impacts on participants well-beings. The responsive approach of respecting cultural differences as emphasized by participants in this study is associated with their interactions with others.

Further, respect for cultural differences was a necessary approach in promoting inclusive and equitable forms of masculinity. Participants believed respect for cultural differences values diversity in terms of gender identities and expressions. Thus, by showing respect, participants negotiate their masculinity and understand the perspectives of others.

The following section discusses participants responses:

Matt's response regarding the expectations of being a man in the US reflected respect for cultural differences:

> "Uh is quite challenging to define a man in the US because lots of things that uh that have uh I mean diluted the definition of a man somehow according to our culture [Malawi], I think being a man in the US is being uh tolerant, knowing your boundaries, and giving, giving others space because that's how the culture is like here, is about giving individuals space…… I mean being a man in the US is being passive. What I mean by being passive is not as that you should be aggressive in terms of approaching things, but what I'm trying to say is uh being receptive of everything that is coming on your way regardless."

Respect for cultural differences aided participants to consciously negotiate and embrace their masculinities.

Likewise, Stephen also explained that:

> "I will be more guided with the way I talk; I can't talk anyhow; we are almost equal in America. So, being a man in the US, you have to be more respectful as an African, you have to conform, you have to adjust to the system."

Stephen's explanation of expectations of being a man in the US also reflect respect for cultural differences. James also employs respect for cultural differences in overcoming his challenges of masculinity in the US.

With Christopher, he explained that:

> "For example, if I see people being attracted to same sex marriages or people, or when I see, people are attracted to lesbian or gay people, I feel confused when I see such kind of things. So, that pressure that comes to mind, when I see these things happening in the US, affects me personally. For years, I have never experienced such kind of things. So, I feel confused and stressed and it is something that personally, I don't agree with. But since I'm living in a country, where these things are permissible, or are normal, then I'm forced to adapt to such a kind of life. Even when I first came to the US, being in class, I was asked to introduce myself, whether I'm he or she, I was confused. How could I answer this question? And why am I being asked this question? Because I'm a man and these people, they see me as a man, I have beards, I have all the characteristics of a man and why I'm being asked whether she or he, so it was kind of confusing. Okay, so I was even mentally confused, but now I'm forced to adapt to that system, that culture, because there's nothing I can do. It's their right, I need to respect it. So, I'm coming from a culture, whereby these kinds of things, and people, they preach against those things. So, these are, these are some of the things that is like, affecting my, mental health, because I'm trying, I'm forced to digest to think, or to accept things that are not okay with me, that seems not to be normal with me."

Christopher's perception also highlights respect for cultural differences.

Avoiding interactions

The need to disassociate perceived by participants was another constructive mechanism in overcoming challenges of masculinity in the US. Avoiding interactions in this study was not seen as a harmful or step to isolation, but rather an approach to upholding traditional masculine norms or cultural values in navigating one's masculinity.

The following section discusses this theme:

Stephen explained that "sometimes, I actively avoid interactions with American ladies." Stephen's emphasis here highlighted how his expectations of being a man, and his masculinity in the US affects his interactions with others. His behavior of avoiding interactions with American women sheds light on how he negotiates his masculinity through power. In this study, avoiding interactions as a masculine negotiation behavior demonstrates upholding traditional masculinity. Studies have shown the relationship between masculinity and power (Lowell 1996; Maurer and Pleck 2006; Coughlin and Wade 2012), and in Stephen's understanding, avoiding interactions with American women does not only aid him in negotiating his masculinity in the US, but also to exhibit his power of masculinity.

With Bradley, in overcoming his challenges of masculinity, he shared that:

> "I had a class on campus in women and gender, and in the whole class, I was the only person who was being identified as a man. I opted to drop the class because I didn't want to be influenced, to sympathize which I felt it could be a problem, I mean not just change me, but even affect my family because there were things which we struggle with each other every day and being in that space, I didn't want to be affected."

Bradley's explanation here clearly reflects the idea of avoiding interactions.

Cultural association with other African men

Cultural association serves as a means of negotiating masculinity and developing a sense of identity and belonging. Anderson (2010) argue that cultural association is a vital space and environment for men to explore and negotiate their identities in ways that are healthy, positive, and inclusive. Connell (2005) explain that cultural associations such as sport teams provide pathways for men to negotiate their traditional gender norms, thence fostering a more inclusive

form of masculinity, a sense of community and belonging, and help-seeking behaviors. Bark (2004) also explains that sports play pivotal role in negotiating masculinity since it creates an avenue for cultural association. McGuire et al. (2020) indicate that fraternities and social network groups create healthier connections in enforcing cultural associations among men with similar interests or ideologies.

In this study, cultural association was an important mechanism for participants in negotiating their masculinity. The different expectations and norms surrounding masculinity prevalent at NAU initiate a sense of community and support for participants in navigating their cultural differences. The space of cultural association, according to participants, affords them the environment to express their traditional or authentic masculinity, whilst also learning, engaging, and adapting to dominant cultural norms and expectations existing at NAU.

The following quotes highlights this theme:

Christopher specifically explained that:

> "With my fellow Africans, since we are coming from the same background, we have common culture, it's easy, but not to a non-African person."

Christopher's explanation here indicated the idea of cultural association. Pasura and Christou (2018) explain that African men in the diaspora are mostly drawn to common cultural values rooted in patriarchy, family, and marriage. In this study, cultural association is a feeling of community among participants with similar ideologies of expectations of being a man, masculinity, patriarchy, responsibilities, and family, and this sense of community is mostly expressed among spaces that depict similar cultural values.

Likewise, David employs cultural association in overcoming his challenges of masculinity:

> "I believe I have great social networks, like, couple of Ghanaian students around, you know, and I stay with some Ghanaians as well, that has been an extra factor you know, we got to share experiences and we laugh about it and all that. So being an African student, because you have a great African society here so I don't feel alone, there are people where you can lay on or talk to at any time."

With David, the feeling of not being alone, and being able to rely on his Ghanaian and African colleagues highlights his mechanism of overcoming his challenges of masculinity in the US thus reflecting cultural association.

Limitations and challenges of study's results

The study's sample size hindered the study's potential for diversity within the sample. With only 10 participants and only one participant from Zimbabwe, exploring the diverse perceptions of participant experiences and opinions was limited. Although the study was able to explore its objectives, a complete understanding of the study's objectives was incomplete. The study's strategy was to focus on the quality of data by conducting in-depth interviews with a small number of participants who reflect the study's target population. However, collecting data from African graduate students from only four African countries was not representative in ensuring a deeper understanding and rich experiences of students' perceptions.

Further, the study's sampling methodology, purposive sampling, ensured diversity within the sample size since it allowed for a diversity in recruiting participants; however, the study's emphasis of only conducting in-depth in person interviews limited the study's sample size and diversity. The inclusion of online and zoom interviews might have had implications on the study's results and offered a wider range of diversity and rich experiences and perspectives.

The potential for inaccuracies in the study's result due to the study's focus on responses that highlighted its objectives affected interpretations, and as such, perceptions of participants in this study must be applied appropriately. Future studies must be designed to address these limitations and ensure diversity of participants experiences and perceptions.

Also, although, this study was exploratory, I developed an interview guide geared toward exploring participants perception on family, cultural background, life in the US, living and working conditions, academic expectations, expectations of being a man, exhibiting masculinity, experiences of navigating their masculinity, and their interactions in the US. The guide helped in exploring the study's objective; however, it was limited in scope in terms of understanding participants lived experiences. Thus, this research could have incorporated document analysis to triangulate its objectives. This could broaden the understanding of participants lived experiences.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This study explored African students' expectations of being a man and how African students negotiate their masculinities in the United States. Participants perceptions of expectations of being a man in their home countries reflected being in charge, power, and superiority. These perceptions were believed to put pressure on participants. However, these pressures cemented participants identities as men, and in performing these pressures, participants met their expectations of being a man, and exercising their masculinity. The perception of being in charge, power, and superiority reinforced participants traditional gender norms, masculinity, and means of achieving success.

In the US, participants perceived being a man as reflecting gender independence and shared responsibility. However, their perception of shared responsibility challenged their identities as men and threatened their masculinity. Shared responsibility indicated women's economic/financial responsibilities in the family. The expectation of shared responsibility in the US threatened participants masculinity, and challenged their constructions of being in charge, power, and superiority.

Gender independence illustrated gender identity and gender expression which differed from what participants expect of culturally defined roles associated with sex; this was closely linked to sexual attraction toward the same sex.

In negotiating their masculinity at NAU, participants adopt two mechanisms, that is, respect, and avoiding interactions. Respect was the idea of consciously negotiating and embracing new

masculine identities dominant in NAU and was perceived as a necessary approach in promoting inclusive and equitable forms of masculinity among participants.

The need to disassociate themselves was another constructive mechanism in negotiating masculinity in the US. Avoiding interactions was not a step to isolation but rather participants approach to uphold traditional cultural values in navigating their challenges of masculinity in the US.

Respect and avoiding interactions were explained as appropriate measure in overcoming and preventing misunderstanding and conflicts and created a positive and supportive environment in which participants learn and adapt to dominant norms in the new cultural context.

Also, participants process of negotiating their masculinity at NAU affected their interactions and associations with others and enacts a sense of community and support in which they navigate their cultural differences. This space of cultural association was vital to participants since it allowed them to express their traditional and authentic masculinity, whilst also learning, and engaging to dominant cultural norms and expectations prevalent at NAU.

The discussion of this study contributes to gender and masculinity theoretical frameworks in understanding the complex and dynamic ways in which gender and masculinity construct identities, interactions, and structures. The perceptions of participants in this study provide insights into the ways in which gender and masculinity shape African graduate students' identities and norms. Further, this study helps in promoting a critical understanding of gender and masculinity of African graduate students in an American university and provide a more nuanced insight into how gendered behavior influences identities, expectations, and behavior.

The discussion of this study can provide recommendations for strategies that are inclusive in addressing cultural shocks and promoting a more equitable society.

With only 10 participants, exploring the diverse perceptions of participant experiences and opinions was limited; however, the study's methodology ensured diversity within sample size and provided rich experiences and perspectives. For this reason, this study must be applied appropriately, and future research must be designed to address the limitations of this study and ensure diversity of participants experiences and perceptions.

In a nutshell, this study explored expectations of being a man and masculinities among African graduate students at NAU and found that participants perceptions of expectations of being a man reflect being in charge, power, and superiority, and in the US and NAU, this is challenged because of the differing expectation of shared responsibility. As such, participants negotiate their masculinity through two mechanisms – respect and avoiding interactions, and these enact a sense of cultural community among African graduate students at NAU.

How masculinity is changing in Africa

Africa is undergoing social, economic and political transformations, and with this, African masculinities are being transformed in ways that emphasize new social and cultural factors. Studies on African masculinities have argued that the rapid changes in African countries are leading to a more inclusive and fluid form of masculinity which highlight changing gender roles, urbanization, and globalization, and these contradicts traditional perceptions of being strong, authority, power, and dominance (Reid and Walker 2005; Ratele 2014a; Van Klinken 2016; Ammann and Staudacher 2021). Uchendu (2008) provide a comprehensive overview of African

masculinities, and stated that, in response to social, economic, and political reformations, African masculinities are undergoing significant changes sparked by developments in urbanization, and HIV/AIDS.

Moosa and Bhana (2023) also explain that education contribute to construction of masculinities in Africa, and although most educational systems and curriculum reinforce traditional notions of masculinity, new educational structures are promoting a more gender-equitable approach. Similar studies have examined the role of respectful forms of masculinity in mitigating gender – based violence in Africa (Oduro, Swartz, and Arnot 2012; Edström, Das, and Dolan 2014; Auchter 2017). Further, other studies have emphasized the need for changing forms of masculinity in reducing political violence and promoting a more peaceful political landscape in Africa (Ratele 2008; Morrell, Jewkes, and Lindegger 2012; Broqua and Doquet 2013; Ratele 2013).

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