African values and Christian marriage: Exploring the influence of African communalism on modern African Christian couples in urban South Africa.

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that **African values and Christian marriage: Exploring the influence of African communalism on modern African Christian couples in urban South Africa** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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ABSTRACT

This practical theological study sought to explore the influence of African communalism on African Christian marriage. Because the aim of practical theology is to reflect theologically on human experience, this study sought to define the lived experiences of modern African Christian couples in urban South Africa. The qualitative research approach was adopted to explore the influence of communalism on African Christian marriage using the views and experiences of six Millennial African Christian couples. The data collected through semi-structured interviews was analysed within a descriptive-interpretive framework using thematic analysis. The findings suggested that African Christian couples preferred the untraditional nuclear family structure characterised by minimal involvement from the extended family. The findings also suggested that African Christian couples integrated cultural practices with their modern lifestyle and Christian worldview by modifying cultural practices. The value of this study is in reconciling African culture and Christianity, leading to a more meaningful Christian practice.

Key words: African Christian marriage, African Christianity, African culture, African marriage, African Millennials, communalism, *ilobolo,* modernization, *ubuntu,* urbanization.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

This is a practical theological study on the influence of African communalism on the marriages of modern African Christians living in urban South Africa. The qualitative research approach was adopted to explore communalism in marriage using the life experiences of six modern African Christian couples. The study explored the couple's experiences with and views on communalism in their marriage, the kind of effect communalism has on the couple's marital relationship and lastly, it explored the relationship between the couple's views and experiences of communalism and their Christian faith.

This study extends understanding and provides insight into how communalism influences the marriage of modern African Christian couples. This study highlights the relationship between African culture and Christianity in marriage and how African culture is valued in a changing modern society. The contribution of the study to the broader field of practical theology is that in describing the lived experiences of African Christian couples in relation to communalism, the study can facilitate a better understanding of contemporary African Christian marriage. This understanding of modern African Christian marriage may inform the theory and practice of pastoral care and counselling in South Africa by reconciling African culture and Christianity.

1.1 Background to the Research Question

The major theoretical construct of this study is communalism and African marriage, and here I introduce the concept as a frame to the research problem. The focus of the study is communalism. Communalism is one of many African cultural values. As a cultural value, it permeates every aspect of life in African society. Communalism can be defined as "a concept that views humanity in terms of collective existence and intersubjectivity, serving as the basis for supportiveness, cooperation, collaboration and solidarity" Khoza (2005:266). A sense of community is a characteristic of African life and in a way defines 'Africaness'. The Nguni proverb which recurs in a variety of languages throughout Southern Africa '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'* (a person is a person through other persons) carries the

essence of the communal life of Africans who understand that they cannot exist in isolation but exist in community. In African community, a person is never an isolated individual but is an inherently communal being rooted in a context of social relationships characterised by interdependence (Msomi 1992:121, Mabovula 2011:39). Since an individual is born out of and into a community, the individual will always be part of a community (Venter 2004:151). This attests to the African view that self-definition is rooted in community. This is the concept of *ubuntu*, an African social philosophy which views community as the essential aspect of personhood instead of self-determination (Nussbaum 2003:4).

The communal nature of African society is reflected in African marriage in the perception that African marriage is a community affair (Twene 2019:17), with the community consisting of both living and dead family members (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:366). Marriage in Africa is not just between two individuals, but between two families (Ansell 2001:701). When an African woman marries, she does not just marry her husband, but marries into an entire family and clan (Baloyi 2013a:9), whereas in Western culture, marriage is perceived as an individual contract. Marriage in African communities is not restricted to one act or event but is a process (Meekers 1992:61). This process is marked by the growth of the relationship of the two families involved, a relationship characterized by mutuality and reciprocity which is expressed through the giving of gifts during several ceremonies. Marriage in Africa is strictly controlled by tribal culture which stands to satisfy the demands and desires of the society rather than the desires of those getting married (Welch 1933:21). African marriage is therefore much less private than Western marriage and for that reason experiences more intervention from family and extended family members.

Before the influence of Western civilization, the determining factor for marriage in African society was not biology but culture (Welch 1933:21). This means that one did not simply marry because one was old enough and felt the need to marry but they married because of cultural and social factors such as the continuation of the

family name. The solidarity and welfare of the clan were more important than the personal desires of any one member of it, so the understanding of marriage was that it was vital to the preservation of family, clan and culture (Welch 1933:22). This is evident in how, though other aims of marriage are acknowledged, traditional African marriage is mainly aimed at procreation (Guy 2004:76, Baloyi 2014:22) and without children a marriage is deemed incomplete (Mbiti 1969:133). This explains why polygamous marriage was preferred among Africans in a traditional society because it assured many children (Idang 2015:108). Marriage in traditional African society was therefore perceived as a social duty and not a mere personal disposition (Welch 1933:22, Mbiti 1969:133, Twene 2019:19). There was no marrying simply for personal fulfilment or for mutual pleasure of the spouses, but people married to have children in order to sustain the family linage (Baloyi 2013a:168).

Because African marriage was supported by social sanctions, those getting married were compelled to conform to certain obligations. One such obligation is the payment of the bride-wealth or *ilobolo* in isiZulu, which is a custom of presenting a gift to the bride's people, practised all over Africa in varying degrees (Mbiti 1969:140). This study purposefully makes use of the term 'bride-wealth', instead of the more common translation, 'bride-price', as a synonym for the Zulu word *ilobolo* to avoid the commercial associations of the term "price" and the implication that *ilobolo* is a "purchasing" of a wife. The term 'bride-wealth' recognizes that the practice serves to transfer wealth (cattle) between the families (Rudwick and Posel 2015:14). It is usually a gift or payment (traditionally cattle amongst Nguni tribes) made by the bridegroom's people to those of the bride as a token of gratitude, appreciating their role in raising the bride (Ansell 2001:706, Posel and Rudwick 2014:4, Yarbrough 2018:652). It is highly esteemed in patrilineal African society because it is understood to establish fellowship between the two families involved and validates or formalises a marriage (Baloyi 2013a:21, Mubangizi 2012:4). In fact, for many tribes, without it a marriage is not recognized (Knoetze 2000, Baloyi 2013a and Yarbrough 2018).

Because culture is dynamically changing over time, African society is changing. An example of this change is how African society has been heavily influenced by Western civilization, resulting in traditional family patterns being altered and substituted by modern family values such as individualism and nuclear family systems (Ekane 2013:1). Individualization and currency have resulted in the commercialization of African marriage. Formerly *ilobolo* was in the form of cattle but change in this medium to money, from a thing to use to a thing to buy, has commercialized African marriage (Welch 1933:26, Mubangizi 2012:41). When *ilobolo* was still in the form of cattle, said cattle used to be provided by the father of the groom but since marriage is becoming an individual concern rather than a family concern, today grooms put together their own money to give as *ilobolo* (Ansell 2001: 701, Posel and Rudwick 2014:54). This has resulted in a decreased marriage rate amongst Africans as high unemployment rates particularly among black South Africans have further eroded men's ability to afford *ilobolo* payments (Posel and Rudwick 2014:9).

There is further evidence of changing values in the modern era. In recent years, the marriage rate has drastically decreased while the cohabitation rate has increased amongst black South Africans (Moore and Govender 2013:623). According to Statistics South Africa, the number of registered civil marriages has consistently declined in the ten-year period between 2010 and 2019, with the highest number of marriages being recorded in 2010 and the lowest number in 2019 (Statistics South Africa 2021:2). Cohabitation in South Africa is predominantly among 20 to 40-year-olds and has grown by about 50 per cent between 1996 and 2007 (Palamuleni 2010: 56). Cohabiting before marriage is seen to be strongly agreed upon by young black South Africans living in informal urban areas (Moore and Govender 2013:630).

Some of this change in values is due to the changing status of women. Rural households have shifted away from a reliance on male migrant wages towards a diversity of income-generating strategies, including women earning wages. The increase in female mobility and migration after the end of apartheid in South Africa has been linked to more women working and a decline in marriage (Mathis

2011:831). The rapid socioeconomic development in South Africa in recent years has contributed to a significant improvement in the status of women through expanding education and participation in the modernized sectors of the labour force (Palamulemi 2010:48). This improvement of the status of women has affected attitudes towards marriage and the roles and status of women in the family. Surveys and statistics suggest that the scheduling of marriage is changing. The postponement of marriage is reflected by the increase in age at first marriage amongst South Africans. The median age at first marriage is seen to be continuously increasing over the years. The latest statistics put the median age at first marriage for civil marriages registered in South Africa at 35 years for men and 32 years for women (Statistics South Africa 2021:4). This is an increase from 30 years in 2001 and 32.5 years in 2007 for males, and from 28 years in 2001 and 30 years for females in 2007 (Palamuleni, 2010: 52). Based on attitudinal data from the *South African Social Attitudes Survey*, almost 70% of black South African women across all ages agreed that people should get an education and a job prior to marrying (Human Sciences Research Council 2012). It is evident that women no longer prioritize getting married.

Observing the scope of scholarly work on the subject, marriage patterns amongst black South Africans have been studied (cf. Garenne et al. 2001, Hunter 2006, Hosegood et al. 2009, Moore et. al. 2013, Posel and Rudwick 2014, Raphalani et al. 2013 and Baloyi 2014 and 2016) but there is seemingly limited knowledge on the influence of communalism on modern African Christian marriages. Given this background, it is necessary to undertake a study on the influence of African communalism on modern African Christian couples who live in urbanized environments.

1.2 Problem Statement

Culture is not static but grows and changes over time. There are a number of causes behind change in culture, including invention, discovery, environment, diffusion and acculturation (Sibani 2018:63-65). This study will focus on the last two causes of change in culture because of the focus on changes that occur because of human

interaction. Cultural diffusion is the process where cultural traits spread from one society into another through cultural contact (Idang 2015:107, Sibani 2018:64) while acculturation is a process where members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviour of another group (Sibani 2018:65). African culture has over the years changed under the influence of Western culture and civilization projected through the Christian mission enterprise and colonialism, as well as urbanization and modernity.

Christianity has emerged historically as part of the cultural impact of the West on Africa and the rest of the world (Bediako 1980:28), playing a role in universalising and globalizing Western culture (Vähäkangas 2004:55). This is because the missionary enterprise overlooked the fact that while Christianity is not a culture, it can only be expressed and communicated through cultural media (Mugambi 2002:516) and so any culture can be a medium for the expression and communication of Christianity. Because of the dismissal of this fact, missionaries imposed Western culture on the peoples who were being evangelized on the assumption that Western culture was 'Christian', while other cultures were dismissed as 'pagan' and 'heathen' (Mugambi 2002:518, Vähäkangas 2004:55). African thought forms and traditions were disregarded to the form of eradication. Conversion to Christianity was therefore determined through one's abandoning of traditional African customs and an adoption of Western ones (Mugambi 2002:519).

This is largely due to the view and approach of the Christian mission enterprise. The ethnocentric approach to missionary work assumed by the European Christian missionaries caused them to demean African culture, forcing it to adapt it to European culture in the name of evangelization (Bučko 2013:34). Missionary Christianity was also in part founded on a dialectic model of the relationship between Christianity and culture. A dialectic model dictates that Christianity and culture are opposed to each other, in perpetual conflict and ultimately irreconcilable (Ezeogu 1998:28). Those of this view believe that the contrast between the gospel of Jesus Christ and culture can only be resolved by culture yielding to the demands of the gospel. This explains why conversion to missionary Christianity was determined

through the abandonment of African cultural practices. Wiser appreciations of African culture only started being voiced in the twentieth century by the Ecumenical Movement. But to this day, the effects of the views of missionary Christianity are still being experienced by African Christians who still struggle to reconcile Christian values and African cultural values. This inevitably influences the marriage of African Christians.

The tension between these two value systems, Christianity and African Culture, are amplified when decisions need to be made during the marriage process and even during the marriage itself. When making decisions, African Christians have the responsibility to make decisions that meet the demands of culture yet without compromising their Christian convictions. Christianity emphasises man's God-given right to choose for themselves (will) and so consent for marriage is limited to the two people getting married (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:366). This can result in family involvement, particularly in giving consent to the marriage, being viewed as a hinderance to the freedom of the individuals getting married. Also, since the family in African context involves both living and dead family members, individuals getting married need to seek advice from and brief dead family members during the marriage process. African Christians are however discouraged from customs involving the dead since Christianity strongly condemns any dealings with one's dead ancestors, labelling it ancestor veneration of the idolatrous kind (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:369).

Christian tradition dictates that a couple is only considered as married and legalized to consummate the marriage after the white wedding is conducted i.e., after the church wedding ceremony where the couple is blessed by a pastor or priest, but African culture considers a couple married after the fulfilment of traditional marriage rites (Onyima 2015:72). This creates a dilemma for African Christian couples who are expected by their relatives to go home together immediately after the traditional ceremony and consummate the marriage while the church ceremony has not yet been performed. It also presents economic challenges as it means that African Christians get married twice and must afford two marriage ceremonies. On the principal of collectivism, traditional African family life is lived out in a patrilocal setting

where a newlywed couple's residence is located at or centred around the residence of the husband's family or tribe. Christian marriage, however, is understood to be neolocal (where a couple's residence is located apart from the families of either spouse) based on Scriptures such as Genesis 2:24 which states that at marriage, a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.

Western culture has also influenced African culture through colonialism. Colonialism is characterised by holding populations captive in their own land with the foreign ruler subjugating the indigenous people and assuming control over human and material resources. Colonialism in Africa began in the nineteenth century and was central to capitalism, accompanied by racism, cultural domination, and European self-aggrandizement (Bulhan 2015:242). Colonialism in Africa was therefore not only economic and political but was also cultural and psychological. To ensure long lasting dominance, the colonialists had to erode the African's social bonding, indigenous beliefs, values, and knowledge, replacing them with Western beliefs, values, and knowledge. The colonialists achieved this by using external agents such as missionaries, anthropologists, physicians, and journalists as well as local agents such as individuals educated in colonial schools or individuals serving as subordinates in the colonial system (Bulhan 2015:243). Western culture began to be regarded as frontline civilization and African ways of living were considered primitive.

A notable element of Western culture which is seen to replace and influence traditional African social values and family life is individualism. The Western worldview values the individual instead of the community which the African worldview prioritizes. As a result, Western marriage is founded on the principles of individualism and independence, contrary to African marriage which is based on the principle of collectivity and interdependence (Siqwana-Ndulo 1998:407). Western marriage is a private affair, a contract between two individuals and strictly monogamous. This is why the Western family model is a nuclear family model where husband and wife live with their own offspring or adopted children. But marriage in Africa is not just between the two people involved, but also involves their families.

This is why the African family model is a multigenerational model which consists of a much wider circle of people including the patriarch, his wife or wives, their offspring together with other kin or non-kin who form part of the household (Siqwana-Ndulo 1998:407). While some Westerners marry for personal fulfilment or for the mutual pleasure of the spouses, Africans perceive marriage as a social duty – it is the duty of all members in society to preserve the family, clan, and culture through childbearing (Welch 1933:22, Mbiti 1969:133, Twene 2019:19). Procreation therefore stands at the centre of African marriage and so polygamy is an acceptable model of marriage since it ensures many offspring.

Western civilization also influenced African culture through the urbanization that came about as result of colonization. Colonizers established their centres (which involved administrative, cultural, economic, and recreational activities) in areas which gave them access to ports (Hope 1998:345). This allowed for the exportation of raw materials to the colonizing countries and importation of manufactured goods. As a result, the special structures of most African economies became focused on port cities, and it was to these cities that the population drifted. African urbanization is therefore linked to rural-urban migration. The end of the colonial era did not decrease migration to these cities, on the contrary, it increased it because these cities maintained and extended their dominance as the primary centres of economic activity (Hope 1998:346). South African urbanization was also shaped by Apartheid policies which aimed to control the movement and settlement of black South Africans (Todes et al. 2010:332). These policies attempted to limit the access black South Africans had to cities and confine them to 'homelands' which were predominantly rural. But as much as black South African households remained based in rural areas, blacks participated in the urban economy through members of their families working in towns or mines (Mabin 1992:14). This led to the rise of informal settlements on the fringes of the towns or cities (Sooryamoorthy and Makhoba 2016:310). Rural evictions also contributed to the migration to urban areas as it created a large landless population (Mabin 1992:15). The end of the Apartheid era saw an increase in the population of urban areas seeing that black South Africans could now move freely. According to the *South African Institute of Race Relations*, the proportion of people living in urban areas increased from 52% in 1990

to 62% in 2011 while the share of those living in rural areas dropped from 48% to 38% over the same period (South African Institute of Race Relations 2013).

Urbanization amongst Africans resulted in the disintegration of the family unit and the distortion of traditional value systems (Hope 1998:354, Ekane 2013:1). The older family members, usually the parents, had to leave home for work in urban areas, causing instability in the family. Where men were pulled and pushed into mining and other industrial employment, marriages were forced into long-distance relationships because the men could not migrate with their partners as the single-sex hostels they were housed in had influx control regulations (Ponsel and Rudwick 2014:54). These long periods of separation weakened long-term relationships, disrupted family life and affected the stability of marriages since these long periods of separation led to extra-marital affairs (Sooryamoorthy and Makhoba 2016:315, Mohlabane et al. 2019:157).

Black urban locations (townships) were characterized by prevalent promiscuity (Junod 1941:29). This in turn lowered the moral standards of African marriage and resulted in the prevalence of *vat-en-sit* unions. *Vat-en-sit* is an Afrikaans expression literally meaning "take and sit". This is a saying used to refer to a union where a man and a woman decide to stay together as married people while the marriage has not gone through the African traditional customs that are used to solidify marriage – the payment of *ilobolo* being the chief custom (Baloyi 2016:1). This erosion is evident in the fact that cohabitation rates are higher in urban areas than in rural areas and are on the rise (Posel and Rudwick 2014:59). This suggests that urban settings provide a greater freedom to form cohabiting unions, which is logical considering the individualistic nature of urban environments. This is because, compared to rural areas with their traditional conservative moral and social values, urban areas are characterized by more modern liberal moral and social values. Cohabitation, premarital sex, adultery, and divorce are socially accepted and prevalent in urban environments (Junod 1941:35, Vähäkangas 2004:43). The education and employment of woman is also prevalent in urban environments because of modern social values which value women's rights.

These changes in African society have directly affected the marriage of Africans, creating a need for a study to develop a thick description of the marriage experiences of modern African Christian couples living in urbanized areas. "A thick description does more than merely record what a person does but establishes the significance of an experience for a person by presenting detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships joining that person to another" (Denzin 1989:83). This problem is worth investigating because such a description will facilitate a better understanding of modern African Christian marriage for the purpose of influencing pastoral care and counselling in the South African context. Because pastoral care and counselling was imported without adapting it to the African context and culture, the pastoral theory and practice in South Africa is primarily Western, being dominated by individualistic theories of Western Europe and North America (de Jongh van Arkel 1995:189). There therefore remains a need to contextualize the theory and practice of pastoral care and counselling in South Africa, making it relevant to meet the unique needs of the African Christian (Msomi 1992:12). This study will provide valuable insight concerning the lived experiences of contemporary African Christian marriage in South Africa. The understanding provided by this study can therefore contribute in the contextualization of pastoral care and counselling in South Africa.

1.3 Research Question

The primary research question addressed in this study is: How does African communalism influence the marriages of modern African Christian couples in urban South Africa? To aid in answering this question, three research objectives have been formulated and put in place, namely, to:

> a) establish the views and experiences of modern African Christian couples concerning communalism in marriage,

> b) determine if family involvement has a negative or positive effect on the couple's relationship,

c) determine the relationship between the couple's views and experiences of communalism and their Christian faith.

The first research objective seeks to identify the experiences and perspectives modern African couples have concerning communalism. Are they pleasurable or regrettable experiences? Is it a negative or positive perception of communalism? The second objective seeks to determine the kind of effect the family's involvement has on the marital relationship. Is the couple's relationship enhanced or disrupted by the family's involvement? The third seeks to investigate whether there is a relationship between the couple's perception of communalism and their Christian faith. The possible implication is that there could be a relationship between the two stemming from the Christian concept of 'leaving and cleaving' which may be viewed as contradicting communal values. The significance of these objectives is the understanding it presents about modern African Christian marriage. The first and third research objectives are personal questions, focusing on the couple themselves - their experiences and views - while the second objective focuses on an external issue, the family's involvement, and its impact on the marriage. The objectives are practical, but they point to much deeper issues that question the relationship between African culture and Christianity as reflected in marriage. The research objectives examine how African culture is valued in a changing modern society.

1.4 Significance of the study

Culture is important to Christian practice because Christianity can only be expressed and communicated through cultural media (Mugambi 2002:516). Any culture can be a medium through which Christianity is expressed and communicated. This is because Christianity is a universal religion. "Christian religion is not anathema to any culture but, like the incarnate Saviour, it is willing to identify with all cultures in order to salvage its anomalies without itself losing its prime nature" (Nwafor 2016:8).

The early Christian missionaries only communicated Christianity through Western culture, making Christianity foreign to Africans, and creating an identity crisis among

Africans who converted to Christianity. But authentic Christian practice in Africa is dependent on the integration of African values with Christian orientations since no one lives authentically outside of their nature (Nwafor 2016:1). This is in line with the dialogic model of the relationship between Christianity and culture. This model views culture and Christianity as two compatible entities that could and should be reconciled, resulting in their mutual enrichment and efficiency (Ezeogu 1998:28). Because of this, it is critical for practitioners of Christianity in Africa to deepen their understanding of African culture. This will allow for Christianity to be lived authentically by many Africans in such a manner that they become truly Africans as well as truly Christians with neither of the identities losing its character (Nwafor 2016:8). The significance of this study is in reconciling African culture and Christianity, leading to a more meaningful Christian practice in terms of marriage.

There are few studies in the field of practical theology that investigate the marital experiences of modern African Christians in urban South Africa. This is a critical gap because without the proper understanding of the marital experiences of modern African Christians, they cannot be correctly attended to through pastoral care and counselling. This study seeks to fill the gap by attempting to obtain new insight on the subject.

The need for such a study is a practical theology matter seeing that 45,9% of the 2019 divorce cases were from marriages that were solemnised by religious rites in comparison to the 44,6% that were solemnised by civil rights (Statistics South Africa 2021:7). This is substantial taking into consideration that only 31,4% of the marriages in 2019 were solemnised by religious rights (Statistics South Africa 2021:2). This means that even though a minority of marriages were solemnized by religious rights, more marriages that are solemnized by religious marriage officers end in divorce - this in a population that is dominantly Christian. It points to a need to understand the experiences of married couples, especially black Africans since they are the dominating population in South Africa and currently make up for the highest number of divorces compared to other population groups (Statistics South Africa 2021:6). The study's practical value is that its results will in the long term

provide an initial descriptive study that may in the future through further study be a basis for influencing and improving the practice of pastoral care and counselling in South Africa through engaging and incorporating African cultural aspects into pastoral care and counselling.

1.5 Contribution to Practical Theology

Swinton and Mowat (2006) define practical theology as "critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in, to and for the world" (Swinton and Mowat 2006:6). The main aim of practical theology is to reflect theologically on human experience, illuminating and transforming said experience. Another understanding of practical theology is that it is the theory of praxis. Praxis is "reflected-upon action and acted-upon reflection" (Macallan and Hendricks 2014:107). Praxis holds the tension between practice and theory through reflective analysis.

This study bears significance on the pastoral care and counselling practice of practical theology. Although the terms 'pastoral care' and 'pastoral counselling' are used interchangeably, they are distinguishable. A pioneering definition of pastoral care was coined by Clebsch and Jaekle (1967): "Pastoral Care consists of helping acts done by representative Christian persons, directed toward the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of troubled persons, whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns" (Clebsch and Jaekle 1967:4). Taking from this definition, pastoral care has a pragmatic focus since it is associated with helping acts. This is the calling and task of those who represent Christian faith, both lay and clergy. Pastoral care has a problem-centred focus, implying a problem-solving approach. Ultimate meanings and concerns is the context of the trouble focused on in pastoral care (Lartey 2003:16). Pastoral counselling refers to "pastoral caring in the form of dialogue and communication to alleviate distress within the context of pastoral ministry" (Magezi 2016:1). Pastoral counselling is therefore the

use of various therapeutic methods "to help people handle their problems and crises in a more developmental way" (Magezi 2016:1).

Magezi (2016) has identified seven discernible ways in which pastoral ministry is practiced in many parts of Africa:

(i) **A combination of African traditional practices and Christian pastoral care practices**. In this approach, pastoral care is concerned with addressing spiritual causes of misfortune and restoring individuals to complete health (Magezi 2016:5). Church leaders (mostly referred to as prophets) operate just like traditional diviners. They perform rituals to exorcise and cast away misfortune and perform healing functions using water and oil (Magezi 2016:5). This approach is common in African Initiated Churches or Zionist in South Africa.

(ii) **A dichotomy between Christian values and practical life**. In this approach pastoral caregivers focus on guiding people to maintain faith in Jesus and relying on him during difficult time (Magezi 2016:5). This is because African Christians secretly revert to traditional healing practices when there are threats to their lives. This is common in missionary churches where issues of spirituality are not significantly addressed (Magezi 2016:5).

(iii) **Agonising and alienating Christianity**. In this approach, pastoral care entails supporting, sustaining and empowering church members who remain trusting in the Gospel of Jesus Christ without wavering (Magezi 2016:6). Such support is necessary because these church members are often ridiculed by extended family members and the community at large.

(iv) **Formation of support structures**. This approach of pastoral care focuses on empowering communities to establish alternative family support structures for African Christians who have been ostracised by their relatives because of their devotion to Christ (Magezi 2016:6).

(v) **Family group enrichment**. This approach of pastoral care focuses on addressing contemporary challenges by establishing age group, gender and family groups to discuss and explore solutions together (Magezi 2016:6).

(vi) **Exorcism and healing**. In this approach pastoral care entails conducting healing and exorcism sessions because problems and life challenges are attributed to curses and forces of evil (Magezi 2016:6). Pastors will pray over items such as water, oils, and pieces of cloth for the protection of the church member. This approach prevents among Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Africa.

(vii) **Position reversal**. In this approach pastoral care entails persuading church members to return to the Christian faith since in times of difficulties, some African Christians abandon the Christian faith to adopt traditional beliefs (Magezi 2016:6).

This study takes an intercultural approach to pastoral care and counselling as advocated by Lartey (2003). According to him, research based on an intercultural approach must aim to respond to three levels of experience and spheres of influence:

> a) "What of the universal experience of humanity is to be found here?
> b) What is culturally determined about this way of thinking, feeling or behaving?
> c) What in this experience can be said to be uniquely attributable to this particular person?" (Lartey 2003:24).

The contribution of the study to the broader field of practical theology is that in striving to describe the lived experiences of African Christian couples in relation to African communalism, the study can facilitate a better understanding of contemporary African Christian marriage. This understanding of modern African Christian marriage may inform the theory and practice of pastoral care and counselling in the African context.

1.6 Definition of terms

The following are working definitions to give a common understanding of terms used throughout this study:

1.6.1 African

According to the [Collins Online dictionary](), 'African' as an adjective has three possible meanings: (i) 'belonging or relating to the continent of Africa, or to its countries or people'; (ii) 'belonging or relating to black people who come from Africa'; and (iii) 'it is used to describe someone, usually a black person, who comes from Africa'. The word was first used in 1548, bearing both Latin and French origins (Latin: *Āfricānus*; French: *affrican*). It is synonymous with black, which can be explained as "designating a member of any dark-skinned group of peoples, esp. a person of sub-Saharan African origin or descent" ([Oxford English Dictionary]()). Therefore, by African couples this study is referring to a set of people who are black and of African descent, to the exclusion of Indian (Asian) and Coloured (mixed-race) people.

1.6.2 African Culture

Since Africa is a continent inhibited by various ethnic nationalities with their differing languages, mode of dressing, food, dancing and evening greeting habits, there are many cultural variations that exist within the various nationalities and ethnicities (Idang 2015:99). Despite these various cultures, Africans share some dominant traits in their belief systems and have similar values that mark them out from other peoples of the world (Idang 2015:100). When this study speaks of African culture, it refers to the common traits in the way of living of most indigenous African people. It is the peculiar way of life, approach to issues, values and world views that are typically African (Idang 2015:102). It is the sum total of shared attitudinal inclinations and capabilities, arts, beliefs, moral codes, and practices that characterize Africans (Ezedike 2009:455).

1.6.3 African values

Values can be understood as a conviction or perspective which a society lives by (Idang 2015:101). The values of a society refer to the attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and actions that are cherished and accepted by a society as a standard and which each member of the society is expected to abide by (Awoniyi 2015:4). Values are the substance of a culture and define a culture which is why values are at times

used synonymously with culture (Nwafor 2016:3). Values therefore permeate every aspect of life of a society and give a society its uniqueness and identity (Idang 2015:102). By African values, this study therefore refers to a coherent set of African attitudes, behaviour and action accepted and upheld by African society as a standard. These African cultural values are meant to regulate interpersonal relationships and ensure the smooth running of the community (Awoniyi 2015:5). Such African values include collectivism, hospitality, respect for elders and authority, unity, hard-working and good character.

1.6.4   African marriage

There are many different forms of marriage across the African continent, but the main principles of African marriage are similar. Unlike Western marriage, which is based on individualism and independence, African marriage is based on the principle of collectivity and interdependence (Siqwana-Ndulo 1998:407). By 'African marriage', this study refers to the traditional marriage amongst Africans which rests on the foundation of the payment of bride-wealth. The giving and acceptance of *ilobolo* establishes a contract between two clans, transferring rights to the bride's reproductive and labour power (Meekers 1992:61, Ansell 2001:699, Posel and Rudwick 2014). Procreation therefore stands at the centre of traditional African marriage since the union serves the purpose of preserving and extending the clan (Welch 1933:22). Traditional African marriage is not necessarily polygamous (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:364) but *ilobolo* does not restrict a man to one wife, especially since the main aim of African marriage is posterity.

1.6.5   Modern

According to the Collins online dictionary, 'modern' as an adjective placed before a noun means: 'relating to the present time, for example the present decade or present century'. Modern is synonymous with 'contemporary' and opposite to 'traditional' or 'ancient'. The Collins online dictionary goes on to explain that as an adjective, 'modern' can sometimes be used to describe people who 'have opinions or ways of behaviour that have not yet been accepted by most people in a society'. By modern couples, the study therefore refers to young African couples whose

perspectives and behaviour is different from the norms and standards of traditional African society.

1.6.6 Family

In Western society, the term 'family' refers to the conjugal pair (husband and wife) who maintain a household with their own offspring or adopted children (Siqwana-Ndulo 1998:407). Family members outside of this circle, the core family, are referred to as extended family. This is the nuclear family model. In African society, however, the term 'family' refers to a much wider circle of people, including the patriarch, his wife or wives, their offspring together with other kin or non-kin who form part of the household (Siqwana-Ndulo 1998:407). This explains why in many African communities, cousins, nephews, nieces are called brothers and sisters while elderly uncles and aunts are addressed as fathers and mothers (Nwafor 2016:4). The concept of 'extended family' is therefore foreign to the African family structure. A multigenerational family model is more reflective of African communal values. By family, this study therefore refers to a household formed by husband, wife/wives/children together with other relatives or non-relatives.

1.6.7 Polygamy

From its Greek origin, *polygamía*, 'polygamy' refers to the practice of having more than one male or female partner (Dwane 1975:221). Polygamy therefore refers to different types of marriage unions that are not monogamous. There are majorly two different types of polygamy: polygyny (the custom of having a husband common to several wives) and polyandry (the custom of having a wife common to several husbands) (Baloyi 2013b:165). Polygyny is the dominant form of polygamy in Africa, and usage of the word 'polygamy' mainly refers to polygyny (Dwane 1975:221). Therefore, the use of 'polygamy' in this study will be referring to the polygynous type of polygamy.

1.6.8 African Christianity

Although many scholars refer strictly to missionary Christianity when addressing the issue of Christianity in Africa, it is important to note that it is not the only kind of Christianity found in Africa. Ezeogu (1998) identifies four strands of African Christianity, namely: Ancient Christianity, Missionary Christianity, Independent Christianity, and Immigrant Christianity (Ezeogu 1998:27). Figure 1 below describes each strand. African Christianity is therefore a broad term.

Ancient Christianity	• dates back to the earliest era of Christianity. Today it is represented by the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.
Missionary Christianity	• founded between the 18th and 20th century by European missionaries, followed by American missionaries. This is now largely the indigenous Church, comprising all mainline Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical confessions.
Independent Christianity	• founded by Africans who had benefited from the teachings and practices of missionary Christianity but were no longer satisfied with them. These have no allegiance to any mother Christian Church outside of Africa. African Independent churches were established out of a need for cultural freedom and identity.
Immigrant Christianity	• founded by European immigrants with no missionary interests or interest in native Africa membership, but only in sustaining the vested interests of European immigrants. An example of this strand is the Dutch Reformed Church.

Figure 1: The Four Strands of African Christianity (Ezeogu 1998:27)

When this study refers to African Christianity, it refers to Missionary Christianity since all research participants were associated with denominations that have their roots in Evangelical confessions.

1.7 Research Design and Methodology

The research paradigm of this study is interpretivism. Because the subject matter of the social sciences is fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences, interpretivism dictates that "a different methodology is required in order to reach an interpretative understanding and explanation that will enable the social researcher to appreciate the subjective meaning of social action" (Fouché and Schurink

2011:309). It is therefore assumed that reality should be interpreted through the meaning the participants give to their life experiences. That is why my ontology (assumption of how reality should be viewed) is that reality is subjective and can only be constructed and not studied objectively (Fouché and Schurink 2011:309). Reality is socially constructed through understanding the participant's worldview. The participant's reality can be discovered by means of a systematic, interactive methodological approach (Fouché and Schurink 2011:311). My theory of epistemology (knowledge and perception) is that knowledge arises from symbolic interactionism (the understanding of symbols and meaning) (Fouché and Schurink 2011:311).

My research approach is qualitative. The primary task of qualitative research is identifying and developing understandings of the meaning people ascribe to phenomena and experiences (Swinton and Mowat 2006:29). The purpose of a qualitative research approach is to construct detailed descriptions of reality. This research approach allows me to study things in their natural settings, attempting to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people give them (Denzin and Lincoln 1998:3). This is what necessitated data to be gathered by means of interviewing participants. As a qualitative researcher, my concern was "understanding rather than explanation, with naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurement, and with subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an insider as opposed to that of an outsider" (Fouché and Schurink 2011:308).

The practical theological methodology that I used is that of Richard Osmer (2008), which states that practical theology has four tasks. These four tasks consist of the descriptive-empirical task which asks the question, "What is going on?"; the interpretive task focusing on the question, "Why is this going on?"; the normative task which asks the question, "What ought to be going on?", and the pragmatic task asking, "How might we respond?" (Osmer 2008:4). Although these tasks should not be viewed in isolation as all four tasks are interdependent and should be seen as a whole (Osmer 2008:220), this study is descriptive and interpretative and only

engaged in the first two tasks of practical theology. The study identified and described what is going on in African Christian marriages in relation to African communalism. This is more than simply gathering facts and information and more about paying attention to the couples and their experiences (Osmer 2008:33).
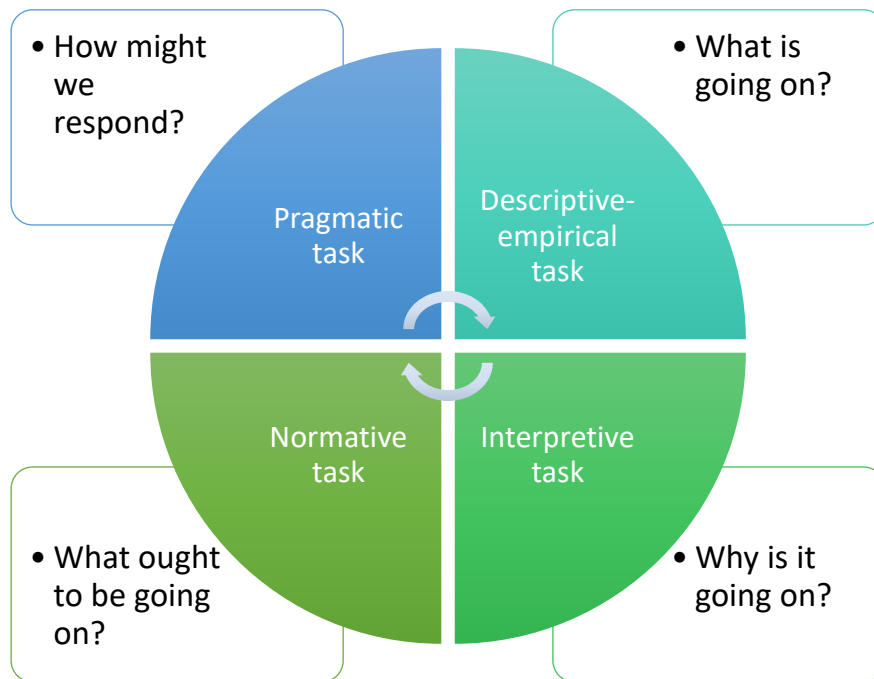
Figure 2: The Four Tasks of Practical Theology (Osmer 2008:4).

The study attempts to interpret what is going on in African Christian marriages by trying to determine reasons for the phenomena identified and described in the first task. This involves a process of understanding the underpinnings of the couple's experiences through drawing upon multiple theories and models (Osmer 2008:82). The interpretations from this study will be useful in guiding understanding about contemporary African Christian marriage and providing new insights with the potential of influencing practical theology by guiding the practice of pastoral care and counselling.

1.7.1   Conceptual framework

A review of the multidisciplinary literature on African Christian marriage reveals a lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding African Christian marriage and its complexities. This can be attributed to the fact that African Christian

marriage is a phenomenon linked to multiple bodies of knowledge situated in multiple disciplines e.g., anthropology, philosophy, sociology, and theology. It is for this reason that I have utilised a conceptual framework for this study. A conceptual framework can be defined as "a network of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon" (Jabareen 2009:51). Jabareen (2009) emphasises that a conceptual framework is not a mere collection of concepts, but it is a construct in which each concept plays a fundamental role (Jabareen 2009:51). Figure 3 below illustrates the concepts that make up the conceptual framework of this study.
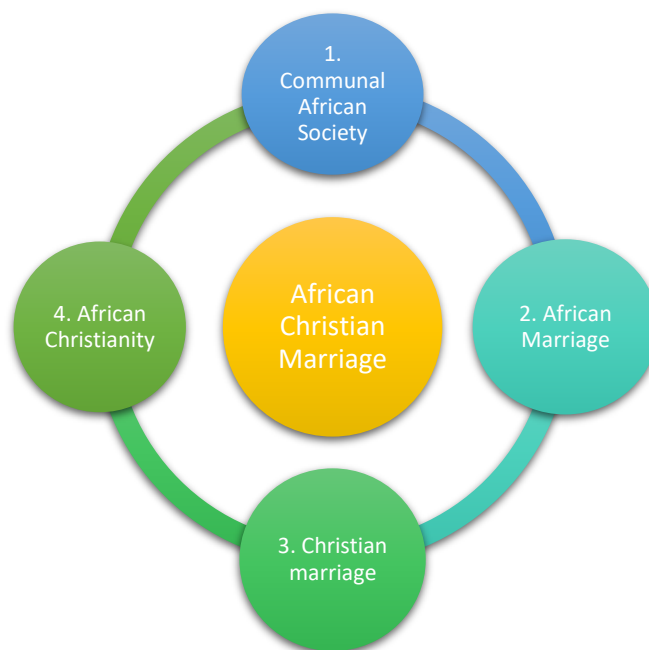
Figure 3: A Conceptual Framework for African Christian Marriage

1.7.1.1   Concept 1: Communal African society
This study explores one of the values of African culture, communalism, which is a theory rooted in the philosophy of *ubuntu. Ubuntu* is a way of life that characterises the communal nature of African communities and is a manifestation of the interconnectedness of human beings – the embodiment of African culture and African worldview which values community and interpersonal relationships (le Roux 2000:43, Tambulasi and Kayuni 2005:148, Haselau et al. 2015:174, Mawere and Mubaya 2016:99). *Ubuntu* is undergirded by five social values: survival, solidarity, compassion, respect, and dignity (Poovan et al. 2006:18).

1.7.1.2 Concept 2: African marriage

The communal nature of African society shapes the structure and function of marriage within African society. In the African setting, marriage is understood as the permanent union of a man and a woman for the purpose of the procreation and rearing of children, mutual companionship, and assistance (Hastings 1973:27). The following traits characterize African marriage and marriage in general when it comes to communal societies:

(a) "The arranging of when and whom young persons are to marry where the opinion of senior members of the kindred is likely to be more important than that of the young people themselves.

(b) "Clear rules to which kindred the children of the union will belong to as a marriage links people of two different kindreds.

(c) "Some way of compensating the other kindred for the 'loss' of their female member as a result of her been given into marriage.

(d) "The institutional provision against childlessness since marriage is related so closely to the continuance of society" (Hastings 1973:28).

1.7.1.3 Concept 3: Christian marriage

The revival in biblical theology during the Protestant Reformation allowed the doctrine of marriage to be grounded on Scripture and gave marriage a new importance among Christians. Marriage in the Bible is founded upon the idea of the covenant between God and his people (Quinn 1971:391). In Scripture portions like Hosea in the Old Testament and Ephesians in the New Testament, marriage is presented as a model for the relationship between the Church and God, founded on love (Methuen 2014:154). Based on the Reformed perspective, the biblical idea of marriage has the creation order as its foundation. The first three chapters of Genesis are therefore considered to be the origin and prototype of marriage (Vorster 2008:466). This is attested to by the fact that both Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament refer to it in their teachings about marriage. Marriage according to

the creation order is characterized by the following principles: mutuality and complementarity, monogamy, and oneness.

1.7.1.4   Concept 4: African Christianity

To understand the relationship between African culture and Christianity, I used Ezeogu's (1998) concept of African Christianity. According to him, there are different versions of African Christianity; there is a past version of an Africa Christianity that was, and there is a current version of an African Christianity that is (Ezeogu 1998:27). The former African Christianity flourished in the Northern third of Africa in the first seven centuries of the Christian era and has since all but disappeared because of the Islamic expansion during the 7th century C.E., leaving only a remnant in the Egyptian Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches (Ezeogu 1998:27). Present-day African Christianity is prominent within the Southern two-thirds of the continent and is said to have four different strands: Ancient Christianity, Missionary Christianity, Independent Christianity, and Immigrant Christianity (Ezeogu 1998:27).

Taking from the various ways in which Christians throughout the centuries have tried to understand the relation of the biblical message to cultures, it is possible to distinguish two major tendencies or models; the dialectic and dialogic models (Ezeogu 1998:28). According to the dialectic model, Christianity and culture are opposed to each other, in perpetual conflict, irreconcilable and the dichotomy between the two being only resolved through culture yielding to the demands of the Bible (Ezeogu 1998:28). The polar end, the dialogic model, views culture and Christianity as two compatible entities that could and should be reconciled, resulting in their mutual enrichment and efficiency (Ezeogu 1998:28).

1.7.2   Sample

The sample was made up of six Christian couples from Evangelical, Charismatic or Pentecostal traditions. They were in the age range of 24 and 35 years old which falls into the Millennial generation. This age group was selected on the basis that the study seeks to describe the marriage experience of modern couples who interact

more with and are influenced more by modern culture. The couples were residing in urban areas i.e., either a town, city, or metro.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling which is a nonprobability sampling technique. In purposive sampling, the researcher deliberately chooses participants because they possess certain qualities which are relevant to the research being conducted (Strydom and Delport 2011:392). Purposive sampling is "typically used in qualitative research to identify and select the information-rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources" (Etikan et al. 2016:2). The target population was black married South African couples who are practicing Christians. Practicing Christians are self-identified Christians who agree strongly that their faith is very important in their life and have attended a church worship service within the past month (Barna Group 2019). The couples were married for at most nine years as this appears to be the duration most couples in South Africa experience challenges the most. This is assumed from the fact that the largest number of divorces in South Africa in 2019 were for marriages that lasted between five and nine years (Statistics South Africa 2021:7). It is also more likely that couples married for this long will have a clearer recollection of their experiences with communalism during their marriage process.

1.7.3   Data collection

Interviewing is the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research since qualitative research is narrative-focused (Swinton and Mowat 2006:35, Greeff 2011:342). Formal semi-structured interviews were conducted with each couple where the researcher listened to the participant's stories trying to understand the meanings they ascribe to their experiences. Interviews are a useful way of getting large amounts of data quickly and are especially effective in obtaining depth in data (Greeff 2011:341). The interviews were conducted with each couple privately, allowing me to guarantee confidentiality of the information that is shared. The interviews were recorded to allow for accurate transcription and to assist with accurate coding during data analysis. The interview guide was constructed using the interviewing guidelines by Greeff (2011) which include the questions being clear

and brief, questions being asked one at a time, questions being open-ended and not leading, and questions pertaining to experience being asked before questions pertaining to the respondent's opinion (Greeff 2011:343-344).

1.7.4 Data analysis

"Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings - a process which involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (Schurink et al. 2011:397). I used thematic analysis to analyse the data collected. Thematic Analysis is a method for analysing qualitative data that involves searching across a data to identify, analyse, and report repeated patterns (Braun and Clarke 2006:57). Conducting thematic analysis involves a six-step process: "familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report" (Kiger and Varpio 2020:1). Since Thematic Analysis is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked about and of making sense of those commonalities (Braun and Clarke 2006:57), this method allowed me to see and make sense of the respondent's shared meanings and experiences of African communalism in marriage.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

Human beings being the objects of study in the Humanities presents unique ethical considerations. The ethical issues are pervasive and complex since data should not be obtained at the expense of human beings (Strydom 2011:113). To ensure this, the approval the College of Human Science Ethics Committee was sought, and permission was granted.

Informed consent is a key ethical principle. Accurate and complete information about the study needs to be provided to the potential participants so that they will fully understand the details of the study and their possible participation (Strydom 2011:117). Participants need to be privy to the details of the study such as the goal

of the study, the expected duration of their participation, the procedures which will be followed during the investigation and the credibility of the researcher (Strydom 2011:117). The potential participants were informed in detail about the nature of the study when they were approached. They were made aware of the goal of the study, the procedures that would be followed and my credibility as a researcher. When the participants agreed to participate, they were requested to provide written consent.

The avoidance of harm to the respondents is another important ethical issue. The researcher has an ethical obligation to weigh the risks of the respondent's participation and to protect the participants from any form of harm that may emerge from the research project (Strydom 2011:115). The prevalence of the highly contagious Covid-19 virus meant that my data collection method (face-to-face interviews) exposed participants to the risk of infection. Face-to-face interviews had the potential of putting the participants' health at risk since the Covid-19 virus spreads through close contact. I therefore had to reconsider my data collection method rather than expose participants to the possibility of physical and emotional harm that would result were they to contract the virus. In order to protect the participants, and in keeping with Covid-19 regulations implemented at the time, interviews were conducted online. Participants were duly notified about this change in the interview method and its implications.

Another ethical issue is voluntary participation. Participation in a research study should always be voluntary with participants not being coerced to participate (Strydom 2011:116). From onset, I assured participants that their participation was voluntary and that they had the option to terminate participation at any point. The participants were not compensated for their participation in the study in keeping with UNISA's ethical policy. Participants were however reimbursed for internet costs incurred during the online interview.

Another important ethical issue is confidentiality. Confidentiality is the handling of information in a confidential manner i.e., limiting access to private information

(Strydom 2011:119). Participants were assured that all their private information would be handled with the utmost confidentiality. Only I as the researcher was aware of the identity of the participants. Also, to ensure the protection of information shared during the interviews, Microsoft Teams was used to conduct the online interviews since the use of other platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp and Skype had proven to create privacy and confidentiality concerns.

1.9 The Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary tool of qualitative research (Swinton and Mowat 2016:56). Unlike quantitative research which uses external tools, it is impossible for the qualitative researcher to be a detached and objective observer. Instead, the qualitative researcher is a participant and an actor in the research process (Swinton and Mowat 2016:57). Qualitative research therefore calls for reflexivity which is the process of critical self-reflection by the researcher throughout the research process (Swinton 2016:57). Qualitative research requires a high level of self-awareness and for this reason it is important for me to describe any biases and assumptions that I had during this study.

As a Pentecostal Christian myself, my role in this study was emic – it was that of an insider. As a pastor who works closely with African Christian couples, I had my assumptions about the relationship between communalism and African Christian marriage. My assumption was that communal values had a negative effect on the marriages of young African Christians. I was aware of my bias throughout the research process and had to monitor and reduce my bias as much as possible. I was careful to be sensitive during the research process, most importantly during the data collection process. I was careful to maintain a neutral and objective position in my responses to the participants, understanding that my behaviour impacts how the participants narrate their views and experiences.

My motivation for the study was from personal experience as a pastor observing the high divorce rate in the church. I observed and grew concerned about the short duration of the marriages of young African Christians. Compared to the older African Christians who separated after many years of marriage, I was concerned by the short-lived marriages of young African Christians. This created a desire to investigate Christian marriage in the African context and the challenges it experiences in modern society that might be at the root of these divorces. I assumed that a connection could be made to the most prominent and well-preserved feature of African society, its communal nature, which is different to modern society which is characterised by individualism. I therefore embarked on an academic journey to discover the influence of the communal nature of African society on the marriages of modern African Christians. The understanding obtained through such a study would be useful in informing the theory and practice of pastoral care and counselling in South African churches, particularly Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches.

1.10 Chapter Outline

1.10.1   Chapter One

This chapter gave an overview of the subject of this research study. This chapter described the motivation for the study, defined the research problem as well as outlined the aims of the study. Furthermore, the significance of the study was described, pointing out this study's contribution to the field of practical theology. The research design and methods used for the study was extensively defined and important terms concerning to the subject were also defined.

1.10.2   Chapter Two

Chapter two outlines the literature review of the study regarding communalism and the marriage of modern African Christians in urban South Africa. This chapter establishes the conceptual framework for the study and indicates where the study fits into the broader debate on the subject, thus justifying the significance of the study (Bak 2004:18).

1.10.3   Chapter Three

Chapter three explores fieldwork I conducted. It first describes the sample in detail, giving a profile of each participant. The chapter then goes on to describe the research process, outlining the data collection technique and the procedure through which the data was analysed. The themes that emerged as the data was analysed are then discussed.

1.10.4   Chapter Four

In this chapter, the research findings are discussed. The results of the research are also interpreted through linking key findings to the investigated literature and by analysing the interrelation of the main themes of the study.

1.10.5   Chapter Five

Chapter five summarises conclusions and recommendations concerning contemporary African Christian marriage. The chapter links the whole research together and outlines limitations of the research and offers suggestions for further research in the practical theological field of pastoral care and counselling.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of the academic literature aimed at providing perspective into the concept of major themes that form the basis of this study. In this section, I will firstly explore the concept of African communalism, linking it to the philosophy of *ubuntu* in which it is rooted. Secondly, I discuss communalism within the context of African marriage. In the next section, I begin my exploration on the different elements that have impacted African marriage, focusing on the impact of modernization and urbanization. I then move on to discuss the impact that Christianity has had on African marriage.

2.2 African Communalism

African communalism is a concept of *ubuntu* since *ubuntu* is a way of life that characterises the communal nature of African communities (le Roux 2000:43, Tambulasi and Kayuni 2005:148). *Umuntu* is the Nguni word for a person, making *ubuntu* an expression of personhood or humanness (Banda 2019:206). *Ubuntu* is a manifestation of the interconnectedness of human beings – the embodiment of African culture and African worldview which values community and interpersonal relationships while the Western worldview values the individual (Haselau et al. 2015:174, Mawere and Mubaya 2016:99). *Ubuntu* is often viewed as a summary of the Nguni proverb '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' which translates to 'a person is a person through other persons' (Haselau et al. 2015:174, Banda 2019:204). "*Ubuntu* is premised on the reciprocal belief that an individual's humanity is expressed through the personal relationships with others in a community and in turn other people in that community recognise the individual's humanity" (Nyaumwe and Mkabele 2007:152). *Ubuntu* can therefore be understood as a person's ability to sustain harmonious relationships with other people (Metz 2007:334). There are five social values of *ubuntu* as described by Poovan et al. (2006) using Mbigi (1997):

2.2.1 Survival

Africans learnt how to survive through caring for one another instead of through individual self-reliance (Poovan et al. 2006:18). This has developed a collective mentality in Africans which allows them to pool their resources to preserve their communities (Poovan et al. 2006:18.) This value of *ubuntu* is evident among South Africa's poor communities where people survive by sharing their limited resources such as land, water, and food.

2.2.2 Solidarity

In service to their community out of the shared will to survive, community members develop a spirit of solidarity. In traditional African communities, sickness, burials, and weddings are community events because the community shares in the community member's life struggles, happiness, and sorrow out of solidarity (Msomi 1992:223, Banda 92019:210). In this spirit of solidarity, personal needs are less import than the needs of the community (Poovan et al. 2006:18). In Western society, individuals often cluster together out of individual motives, but in African society, the individual has a social commitment to share what he has with others (Van der Walt 1988:9). Selfishness and stinginess is therefore understood to be very anti-social. That is why it is rare for the traditional African to say, 'this is my land', instead, he will say that 'this is our land' (Van der Walt 1988:9). This could be because in the traditional communal setting, people are not valued based on their achievements, but people are valued for their humanness.

2.2.3 Compassion

From childhood, Africans are taught to understand that they are interconnected with all human beings and therefore share a common and communal responsibility for each other (Poovan et al. 2006:18). In communal society characterized by *ubuntu*, man is never an isolated individual or an independent entity, instead every individual forms an integral part of society (Van der Walt 1988:8, Mawere and Mubaya 2016:101). The idea of the 'self' becomes so entrenched in the community that the individual identity of an African almost disappears (Poovan et al. 2006:18). This

does not mean individuality does not exist in the African worldview but means that the individual does not take precedence over the community (Mawere and Mubaya 2016:101, Twene 2019:15). Acts of compassion are understood to create and maintain interconnectedness amongst human beings. As Gichure (2015) points out as cited by Banda (2019), this is why in traditional African communities, hospitality was prioritized to such an effect that there were no private hospitality facilities such as hotels and restaurants, nor care centres such as hospitals, orphanages and geriatric homes, because those in need were cared for by family and community within the confines of their homes (Banda 2019:209).

2.2.4 Respect

African society is both communal and hierarchical (Nwafor 2016:4). Respect is one of the building blocks of an African community as it delegates the position of a person within the hierarchical society (Haselau et al. 2015:176). Even the traditional African household is organised in a patriarchal hierarchy in which every member has his/her precisely defined status and role (Knoetze 2017:18). By according the father the position of head of the household, the patriarchal family structure subordinates women to men. As a result, the wife's primary role is to satisfy her husband sexually, to cook for him and to bear him children (Sathiparsad et al. 2008:6). Whereas male children are socialised to become future heads of households, female children are socialised to accept male domination and control and to stay faithful, loving and subservient to their male partners (Sathiparsad et al. 2008:6, Ndofirepi and Shumba 2014:240). This is why daughters can be given away in marriage by their fathers with their father's consenting on their behalf (Wilson 1981:137, Ekane 2013:3).

Because communal society is hierarchal by nature, the individual is limited to a specific place in the social hierarchy and is therefore limited in taking initiative since he must wait upon seniority (Van der Walt 1988:12). It therefore becomes important for family and community members to maintain their social position since moving out of the hierarchy creates a social imbalance. Views and opinions that are contrary

to and criticise authority are often seen as disloyal and disrespectful (Haselau et al. 2015:177). Because of the fear of creating an imbalance by being perceived as disrespectful, the traditional African tends to value personal relationships more than the truth (Van der Walt 1988:12). Family and community members will suppress their views or be dishonest out of wanting to live in harmony at all costs. In this way communalism becomes an idol for Africans because social acceptance becomes the highest goal in life (Van der Walt 1988:13).

2.2.5 Dignity

Since *ubuntu* is an expression of humanness, *ubuntu* calls for humans to be treated in a dignified way which upholds their human value (Banda 2019:211). An example is how in traditional African communities, greeting other people is not just a matter of politeness, but it is a way of acknowledging and affirming the person's human value (Banda 2019:212). This gives the idea that acting in a manner not fitting a dignified person not only diminishes the value of the victim but also diminishes the value of the perpetrator (Banda 2019:211).

2.3 Communalism and marriage in Africa

The communal understanding shapes the structure and function of marriage in African society. Unlike Western marriage, which is founded on individualism and independence, African marriage is based on the principle of collectivity and interdependence (Siqwana-Ndulo 1998:407). Marriage in the communal African setting can be understood as the union, permanent at least by intention, of a man and a woman for the purpose of the procreation and rearing of children and mutual companionship and assistance (Hastings 1973:27). In traditional African society during pre-industrial times, African families were patriarchal, hierarchical, polygamous, and patrilineal (Gelderblom 2004:24, Ekane 2013:1). The following traits are characteristic of traditional African marriage:

2.3.1 Family involvement

Marriage in African societies is a public event which does not take place at once but through a series of meetings, negotiations, and ceremonies (Welch 1933:23, Hastings 1973:30, Twene 2019:4). Marriage as a community affair means African marriage experiences a lot of involvement from families as they are part of the negotiations and ceremonies that make up a marriage. Although it is common for most African societies that a young man independently choose a wife for himself, his choice must still be sanctioned by his parents (Musharamina 1981:14, de Haas 1984:91, Baloyi 2013b:10, Ekane 2013:3). In some African societies, however, marriage is arranged by the parents without the involvement of their children. The Vavhenda community of the Tshivenda culture based in Limpopo still practices arranged marriages. They regard marriage as a sacred institution because it involves the welcoming of a new member to the clan, for this reason, it cannot be left in the hands of an individual to choose his/her own marriage partner but is the responsibility of the head of the family (Raphalalani and Musehane 2013:19). African royal families prefer arranged marriage as the motive behind the arrangement of the union is usually a socio-political one (de Haas 1984:90). This practice of arranged marriage is reflective of the African perspective that the solidarity and welfare of the clan are more important than the personal desires of any one member of it (Welch 1933:22, Van der Walt 1988:9, Ndofirepi and Shumba 2014:235). This perspective of marriage as a tribal matter curtails the freedom of the individuals involved, at times, beyond reasonable limits.

In traditional African society, the bride's consent is not essential to a legal marriage if her father consented on her behalf (Wilson 1981:137, Ekane 2013:3). This perspective continues to fuel controversial traditional practices such as *ukuthwala* and other forms of child marriages in African societies. *Ukuthwala* is the mock abduction of an unmarried woman or girl for the purpose of a customary marriage common in rural KwaZulu Natal and Eastern Cape (Mwambene 2018:532, Mubangizi 2012:40). It involves the 'capturing' of the girl by the future husband and a group of his friends, after which a report is sent to the girl's family and *ilobolo* negotiations begin (Mubangizi 2012:39). Girls as young as 12 years old are forced

to marry older men through this practice (Mubangizi 2012:40). In 2019, the South African Department of Home Affairs registered 9 bridegrooms and 121 brides under the age of 18 for customary marriages (Statistics South Africa 2021:4), an increase from the 8 bridegrooms and 77 brides in 2017 (Statistics South Africa 2019:4). According to sections 24 to 27 of the South African Marriage Act, 1961 (Act 25 of 1961), the marriage of minors is permitted so long as there is consent from both parents. The fact that no mention is made of the consent of the minors themselves in the Marriage Act affirms the traditional African view that marriage has little or nothing to do with an individual. There is an obvious infringement of children's rights here seeing that the Children's Act 38 of 2005 places the age of consent for marriage at 18, but law reforms to end child marriages is proving to be a difficult task since it presents potential conflict between children's rights and cultural rights (Mwambene 2018:529). South Africa's marriage policies are however now being reviewed and the recently produced Green Paper on Marriage in South Africa proposes to prohibit marriages that involve minors (Republic of South Africa Government Gazette 44529 2021:54).

In traditional African society, married life was lived out within a patrilocal and patriarchal family structure (de Haas 1984:313). After marriage, the bride was expected to live under the supervision of her mother-in law and was subject to strict observance of *ukuhlonipha* (showing respect) while living at her in-law's homestead. This included walking with averted eyes and dressing modestly which included wearing long dresses and skirts, long-sleeved dresses and shirts as well as a head-wrap (Wilson 1981:139, de Haas 1984:197). In fact, in a traditional Venda-Lovedu marriage, the groom's mother is considered a partner in the marriage of her son and has rights of control over the bride (Krige 1981:151). This subservience that is institutionalised in the bride's relationship with her mother -in-law may cause tensions in the marital relationship, particularly if the wife feels she is not being treated fairly (de Haas 1984:204).

There are, however, some advantages of the family's involvement in a marriage. Family involvement in African society opens a door for parental commitment and responsibility towards one's marriage (Baloyi 2014:28). The family acts as a source of unconditional social support, ensuring the success of the couple's marriage (Makwanise and Masuku 2016:3). In times of need, the couple has assistance from family members. This way they have access to help from people they are familiar with rather than strangers or a hired hand. Another advantage is that divorce is not easily decided upon because the decision to divorce must be consensual among family members (Baloyi 2014:28). Marital disputes that lead to separation are almost always mediated by extended family members (Smith 2001:140, Makwanise and Masuku 2016:3, Mohlatlole et al. 2017:256). This can be seen as an advantage in cases where the reasons for divorce are unjustified, but it can easily be a disadvantage where the families do not provide their consent even though the reasons are justified. Another disadvantage of family intervention is how it can undermine the couple's authority in decision making as they cannot decide without their family's involvement. Family involvement is therefore critical in African marriage, bearing the power to either stabilize or destabilize a marriage (Twene 2019:18).

2.3.2   Procreation

Because marriage in the traditional African society is for the preservation and extension of a family or clan (Welch 1933:22), marriage is mainly aimed at procreation (Junod 1941:27, Mugambi 2002:533, Baloyi 2014:22). According to the African communal perspective, having children is not just a personal choice, but is the fulfilment of one's obligation to one's family and community (Smith 2001:139) since a child doesn't belong only to his or her biological parents but belongs to the family, clan and community (Idang 2015:108). The understanding of children being at the centre of the marriage is largely supported by the payment of the bride-wealth whose purpose is gaining, not just the woman as a person, but her womb (Junod 1941:27). Legal paternity is also based on the payment of the bride-wealth. African communities who practice the payment of the bride-wealth are patrilineal, meaning

the children of a legitimate union are seen as belonging primarily to the kin of the father (Hastings 1973:31).

Offspring is so important in an African marriage that without it, a marriage is incomplete (Mbiti 1969:133). For the traditional African, a good marriage is a fruitful marriage. It is only when a child is born that a marriage is regarded as successful. Begetting children is essential in guaranteeing the African a prolonged life as a living being through his descendants (Pretorius 1975:119). In traditional African society, many offspring also increased the African man's power within the clan (Baloyi 2013b:169). Children in African society also hold a spiritual significance in that they provide for the reincarnation of ancestors (Baloyi 2013a:36, Ndofirepi and Shumba 2014:238).

Childlessness amongst traditional Africans is therefore a serious issue because it threatens the continuance of the lineage. It is an affliction particularly for married women and their natal families. For the childless married woman, childlessness means she cannot create a uterine grouping which constitutes an economic unit, assuring her comfort in her old age when her daughters-in-law take care of her (Ngubane 1981:89). It also means her house will not be perpetuated and she will not acquire the status of being an ancestress in the afterlife (Ngubane 1981:89). Childlessness is such a serious issue that it is institutionally provided against through polygamy and levirate marriage. Where a wife proved barren or when she only produced girls, her husband was expected to take another wife (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:366, Mugambi 2002:533). In fact, some African traditions demand the parents of an infertile wife to provide a second wife (usually her sister) to bear children or else return the bride-wealth (Baloyi 2013a:35, Kuper 2016:10, Makwanise and Masuku 2016:3). Where it became evident that the husband was the one who was infertile, he would arrange an assignation between his wife and a relative (Baloyi 2013a:36). In cases of premature death of a spouse before children could be born, the remaining spouse marries or is given to a relative of the deceased spouse for the purpose of having children through them (Baloyi 2013a:37).

2.3.3   Bride-wealth

A common practice in the African marriage process is the payment made by the bridegroom's people to those of the bride. The payment is understood to validate a marriage (Ogbu 1978:246, de Haas 1984:127) which is why without it a marriage is not recognized (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978, Knoetze 2000, Baloyi 2013a and Yarbrough 2018). The payment of bride-wealth is therefore highly esteemed in African society. The payment of the bride-wealth also signifies the compensation for and transfer of the rights to the bride's reproductive and labour power (Ogbu 1978:242, de Haas 1984:129, Ansell 2001:699) as well as the transfer of the bride's offspring from one family to another (Junod 1941:27, Ogbu 1978:242, de Haas 1984:129, Ansell 2001:702). The payment of the bride-wealth therefore gives the husband domestic and sexual rights over his wife (Ogbu 1978:247). The payment also plays a symbolic role in creating and perpetuating an alliance between the two families involved (de Haas 1984:129). Bride-wealth is also a token of gratitude towards the bride's family, appreciating their role in raising her (Ansell 2001:706, Posel and Rudwick 2014:4, Yarbrough 2018:652).

These functions are primarily from a male point of view, pointing out what men and their families stand to gain through paying the bride-wealth. Although there are not many scholars who venture in the opposite direction, women also stand to gain from the payment of bride-wealth. Having bride-wealth paid for a woman and therefore her acquiring the status of a wife is a significant event in African society (Ogbu 1978:256). This is because marriage in Africa is understood to be an avenue into the status of adulthood (Preston-Whyte 1981:160, de Haas 1984:137, Ansell 2001:703, Mohlabane et al. 2019:156, Twene 2019:18) and for the woman it marks the transition from being a girl to being a woman. To have *ilobolo* paid for a woman is an 'accomplished' position and is important to African women as they gain considerably in social status both in the family and the community (Rudwick and Posel 2015:7). *iLobolo* is also viewed as a reward for having the woman having 'carried herself well' and it therefore adds value to the woman (Rudwick and Posel 2015:7). African women also perceive a sense of stability and security through

ilobolo. This is on account of the difficulty the man endures in gathering and paying for *ilobolo* which reduces the risk of the marriage easily ending (Rudwick and Posel 2015:8).

Bride-wealth also holds a religious value. In traditional African society, the dead and the living are understood to be interdependent. In order to be fully integrated and successful in the spirit-world, the dead need the attentions, respect and sacrifices of the living (Ngubane 1981:89). On the other hand, the living need the ancestors to protect them and grant them fortune. It is therefore in the interest of the living to fulfil their marriage obligations in order to satisfy the ancestors (Ngubane 1981:89). In its religious value, the bride-wealth functions to make the bride known to her new ancestors (Yarbrough 2018:660). The bride-wealth is also key in having the ancestors accept a marriage, attracting their blessing to the marriage (Posel and Rudwick 2014:63, Mkhize 2011). The cattle given as bride-wealth are believed to cause the ancestors to accept and bless the marriage, resulting in children being born, hence the African saying: 'cattle beget children' (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 2015:184). That is why in the traditional African context, a marriage is only regarded as successful once a child is born and infertility is considered to be a curse (Baloyi 2013a:36).

In traditional African society, the cattle given as bride-wealth were returnable when the marriage failed. Even though traditional African marriage was meant to be indissoluble, separation and divorce did occur, usually based on the wife's ill behaviour, including witchcraft and adultery (Makwanise and Masuku 2016:3). In such cases the husband would initiate divorce and repossess the *ilobolo* cattle. But the wife was limited in initiating divorce on grounds of her husband's ill behaviour. This is most likely a result of the wife's family who would resist the marriage ending because of the implication of having to return the cattle or payment (Ogbu 1978:252, Sennott et al. 2021:58).

Misconceptions about bride-wealth have led to the abuse of women and decreased marriage rate amongst Africans. For years criticism against the payment of the bride-wealth was based on the misconception that it was regarded as amounting to purchasing a woman. This misconception undermines a woman's status in a marriage and often leads to abuse. This misconception has been exposed as incorrect over the years. Knoetze (2000) correctly states that "the husband does not obtain ownership of his wife, as he may not 'sell' her to another man and may be faced with her leaving him in the event of ill-treatment which are both actions inconsistent with ownership" (Knoetze 2000:533). However, some scholars maintain that *ilobolo* is the source of unequal gender relations in African marriage. "In a patriarchal African cultural system, *ilobolo* and marriage change the position of a woman from being the responsibility of her parents to being the responsibility of her husband and his family" (Rudwick and Posel 2015:5). Because of this, the wife needs to respect (*ukuhlonipha*) her husband and in-laws. *Ukuhlonipha* is associated with submissive behaviour such as the wife refraining from directly or publicly voicing her opinions (Rudwick and Posel 2015:5). Some studies have proven that in some societies, men still manipulate the institution of *ilobolo* to enforce the ownership of women (Ansell 2001, Rudwick and Posel 2015). Ansell (2001) points out how to "some young Southern Africans today, lobola is about 'buying women', however uneasy they themselves may feel about expressing this view" (Ansell 2001:715).

2.3.4   Polygamy

Polygamy in traditional African society served several functions. Firstly, it served as a remedy for infertility. Because marriage was aimed at procreation, specifically the production of a male heir, a wife's infertility was a valid reason for her husband to polygamously seek another wife (Baloyi 2013b:168, Hastings 1973:36). Polygamy provides a solution for infertility without the barren woman being divorced or discarded, thus ensuring her social security since she remains a part of the household (Onwurah 1982:107). Polygamy was also a solution where a marriage only produced female children (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:366, Mugambi 2002:533). Because sexual activity was aimed at producing children, it was commonly

accepted among many traditional African communities that menopause brought an end to the need for sexual activities for wives (Baloyi 2013b:169). It was therefore a common practice for an older woman to tell their husband to get a new, younger wife once she had fulfilled her sexual responsibility in the marriage by producing children.

Polygamous African cultures believe polygamy prevents immorality and divorce (Baloyi 2013b:170). Some African cultures forbid sexual intercourse for pregnant wives, and with some cultures, even while they are nursing, which could be as long as three years. Husbands of such wives could be unwilling to wait for the wife to wean the child before having sex again, so he could take another wife for that reason. The wife could even suggest that her husband take another wife out of fear that he might fail to be faithful during this period. The same reasoning was behind a husband whose wife had fallen ill for a long period of time. The husband's family would encourage him to consider a second marriage to allow the first wife to recover and even gain a caretaker (Baloyi 2013b:172). In the same reasoning of preventing adultery, it is a justifiable reason for a husband to take an additional wife if his wife is less sexually motivated than him. As a preventive measure against adultery, polygamy allowed a man who worked far from home to take one wife with him to his place of work in urban areas while another wife remained in the rural areas to take care of the children and the household (Baloyi 2013b:172). *Mnakwethu*, a popular television programme on Mzansi Magic (DSTV Channel 161) has asserted this reasoning. A few male participants on the programme indicated that they needed an additional wife who would live in the village with his parents in order to care for his elderly parents while he and his first one lived and worked in the city.

Polygamy offers every woman a chance to fit in with social norms by being married since remaining unmarried is seen as a disgrace in African society (Baloyi 2013b:171). Mbiti (1969) best articulates the implications of singleness in African society:

"For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence. Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator. Therefore, marriage is a duty, a requirement from corporate society, a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and lawbreaker, he is not only abnormal but 'under human'. Failure to get married means that the person has rejected society and society rejects him in return." (Mbiti 1969:133).

Single status in African communities has several negative associations. Single women are often suspected of witchcraft, lack of feeling or a desire to break apart people's marriages (Baloyi 2013b:170). The perception that every adult must be married creates a situation where a woman would choose to be one of several wives rather than be unmarried.

Polygamy can be a source of labour in that the more wives a man had, the more children he could have, and his labour force would be greater. Labour was required especially in societies where stock and crop farming were the common means of survival. Taking care of livestock and ploughing of fields would be easier if there were more people than if this were just the man himself as the breadwinner (Baloyi 2013b:171).

Polygamy can also function as a way of taking care of widows and their children (Baloyi 2013b:173). Levirate marriage, where the younger brother of the deceased takes the deceased' wife as his own, usually happens as an additional marriage. Levirate marriage ensures the wife remains as part of the family, retaining the wealth of the deceased with the family. Polygamy also ensures the continuance of the family line (Onwurah 1982:106).

2.4 The impact of modernization and urbanization on African marriage

Urbanization in African communities has resulted in the erosion of traditional value systems (Hope 1998:354, Nussbaum 2003:2). The process of urbanization which involves the movement from rural to urban areas, has resulted in acculturation which

has re-shaped the structure of contemporary African marriage (Ekane 2013:4). Younger generation Africans have adopted nuclear family patterns at the expense of a typically African communal life (Ekane 2013:1).

Together with urban migration, increasing education has contributed to the emergence of a model of marriage that privileges individual choice and interpersonal emotions (Smith 2001:147). This emerging model of marriage, symbolized and enforced by urban residences with their nuclear household structure, emphasizes the personal relationship between husband and wife characterized by love, intimacy, commitment and romance (Smith 2001:129, Ekane 2013:4, Pauli and Dijk 2016:259). This emphasis on the marital relationship is the reason why younger generation Africans prefer to choose their marriage partners themselves. As a result, the traditional function of marriage as creating and continuing a relationship between two families is being lost in the process. Marriage is becoming a matter of personal choice rather than an arrangement between families where elders have a dominant say (Onwurah 1982:53). The authority of parents is also seemingly diminishing seeing that it is futile for parents to refuse the choices of their children as they insist on their choices, even when they go against their parent's advice (Onwurah 1982:53). This points to the young African's openness to challenging authority, a concept that is foreign in traditional African society since traditional society is hierarchal and limits individual to a specific place in the social hierarchy (Van der Walt 1988:12). For the traditional African, it is important to maintain the social balance and live in harmony at all cost by remaining in their social position. This involves suppressing views and opinions that are contrary to or criticise authority (Haselau et al. 2015:177). Young African's are however more concerned with protecting their independence and freedom.

Education brings exposure to contemporary ideas about family and gender roles (Mohlabane et.al 2019:164). The contemporary understanding of human rights often clashes with cultural perspectives and practices. Customs such as the payment of *ilobolo*, polygamy, and controlling requirements for new brides stand in stark contrast with the rights to dignity and equality (Mubangizi 2012:41). The power of tradition is therefore reduced by education, forcing people to broaden their

horizon and leading them to considering traditional customs as outdated (Onwurah 1982:50). This is seen in how one study has found that couples of a professional class emphasise the importance of personal commitment in the establishment of a marriage over the importance of customary ritual (de Haas 1984:195). Black professionals therefore perform minimal customary rituals and prefer the wedding to be small-scale and private because of the expenses incurred with a large wedding (de Haas 1984:307). However, these professionals comply with their families' expectations of a large wedding because cultural values such as reciprocity and community involvement were found to persist even in the contemporary setting (de Haas 1984:180, Pauli and Dijk). The practice of *ilobolo* and the role played by families in the lives of the married couple was also identified as the persistent values that remained unchanged in the modern setting (de Haas 1984:309, Knoetze 2000:532). There has also been a notable development in attitude amongst Africans concerning their customs. Changes in the socio-political climate in South Africa have contributed to this through the ideology of Black Consciousness which had an incredible impact in changing conceptions blacks had of themselves (de Haas 1984:310). Out of a need to challenge white Western models of living, blacks are taking pride in and preserving what is meaningful of their culture. So, Africans are not simply abandoning traditional practices in favour of modern ones, instead, they are using resources of the past and the present to create their own systems of marriage and family organization (de Haas 1984:309, Meekers 1992:63, Smith 2001:132).

The practice of *ilobolo* has persisted amongst the change in patterns of living in African society, but the way this practice is done has been affected by the change in living patterns. Traditionally, there were three ways in which a young man could acquire cattle for marriage: (1) from his father and other senior kinsmen, particularly his mother's brother/s who would have benefited from his mother's bride-wealth; (2) from raiding another chiefdom; and (3) from serving a chief or wealthy man who would repay their service after a year with a heifer (Wilson 1981:140). The growth of a money economy, together with the development of individualism in African society, saw the diminishing of assistance with cows for marriage from family.

Today, most young men must pay their own bride-wealth (Ansell 2001:701, Yarbrough 2018:650). This has been made difficult by the rise in the cost of cattle in terms of cash, the increase in the number of cattle required for marriage and high unemployment rates particularly among black South Africans (Wilson 1981:141, Posel and Rudwick 2014:9). The increase in the number of cattle required is a result of a shift from a rural approach to life to an urbanized approach which altered attitudes about bride-wealth. Traditionally, the factors that contributed to the number of cattle or amount required for the bride-wealth was the girl's virtues of being a hard worker and a virgin, but over time, it was the girl's social and economic status that became crucial contributing factors (Baloyi 2013a:27). Families that require high payments for bride-wealth often force drastic departure from tradition such as court marriage or *ukuthwala* (Onwurah 1982:56). *Ukuthwala* is where the bride is abducted by the groom and his friends as a means of hastening negotiations and reducing the costs incurred during the marriage process (Wilson 1981:135). High payments for bride-wealth also result in young Africans resorting to cohabitation in the place of marriage. In recent years, the marriage rate has drastically decreased while the cohabitation rate has increased amongst black South Africans (Moore and Govender 2013:623).

A shift from a rural approach to life to an urbanized approach has also led to a reversal of attitudes towards children (Berglund 1975:10). In traditional African society children are regarded as a richness and the ultimate goal of a marriage, but in an urbanized environment, children present more expenses and so smaller nuclear families are preferred. Scholars have noted the consistent decline in the family size in African society from large families to smaller households because of modernization (Ekane 2013:4, Sooryamoorthy and Makhoba 2016:310). The family size of South African households is on a continual decline seeing that the average household size has decreased from 4.38 in 1993 to 3.21 in 2014 (Wittenberg et al. 2017:1302).

Economic pressures have also discouraged polygamy and the patrilocal setting of traditional family life (Sooryamoorthy and Makhoba 2016:313). Other traditional practices have been affected by the growth of a money economy such as the practice of a new bride living at her in-law's homestead after marriage (Wilson 1981:140, Rudwich and Posel 2015:15). This period the bride spends living with her in-laws is diminishing since grooms now establish their own homesteads sooner than they used to.

2.5 The impact of Christianity on African marriage

2.5.1   Christianity in Africa

Christianity in Northern Africa is as ancient as the history of the church itself (Uaene 2002:39). It can only be speculated when and how Christianity reached the African coastline, but it can be estimated that there was a spread of Christianity by 180 C.E (Burns and Jensen 2014:46). Missionaries from Alexandria (north Egypt) can be traced in Ethiopia from the middle of the fourth century, with several dioceses being established along the Mediterranean coast by the end of the century (Oduyoye 2009:15). During this time, North Africa became the centre of Christian activities, producing leaders such as Clement of Alexandria, Augustine and Tertullian who were pillars the universal Church balanced on (Van der Merwe 2016:562). By the end of the fifth century, Christians could be located in what is today Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia Libya, Egypt, and parts of Sudan. This ancient Christianity in northern Africa, however, did not reach the region south of the Sahara. The coming of Islam in the seventh century saw a disturbance of the Christianization of Africa. The churches in Egypt and Ethiopia survived through politico-religious diplomatic negotiations, but Christianity in Sudan was slowly replaced by Islam (Oduyoye 2009). Archaeological evidence is all that remains of the Christianity of this period and is today represented by the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Ezeogu 1998:27, Van der Merwe 2016:562).

It would then be the Latin Christians of Portugal who would initiate the Christianization of Africa. Prince Henry of Portugal had been exploring the

possibility of a Christian kingdom in Africa and so he included Catholic missionaries in his trade expeditions (Akrong 2013:173). It was these Portuguese Catholic missionaries who made the first contact between Western European Christianity and Africans in the fifteenth century when they made contact with the Bakong people in the Congo River region (Akrong 2013:174, Van der Werwe 2016:563). They also made contact with the kingdom of Mutapa in the Zambezi River region. However, these missions didn't take strong root as they faded along with the Portuguese power (Oduyoye 2009:16). The Portuguese missionaries then turned their attention to Ethiopia, expecting to find the kingdom of Prester John, only to be disappointed by the way the Ethiopian Coptic Church practiced Christianity (Akrong 2013:174). They found fault with how the Ethiopian priests were married and how the church did not recognize the pope (Oduyoye 2009:30). Following these missions was a few unsuccessful missionary efforts by Protestant and Moravian missionaries in the eighteenth century. It was the eighteenth-nineteenth century revivals in Europe that would lead to a renewed interest in missions in Africa. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) started work among the freed slaves in Sierra Leone, followed by the Wesleyan Methodist Mission (Akrong 2013:175). Mission work in South Africa was started by the Moravians in 1792, and soon the London Missionary Society as well as other mission bodies followed behind. By 1815 a few mission bodies had successfully established themselves in these two parts of Africa. There was explosive success in mission work in Africa from about 1840 onwards due to the expansion of European trade and colonialism (Oduyoye 2009:16).

Christianity that came through the missionaries was presented as part of the Western European civilizing mission in Africa. This presentation of Christianity made Christianity excessively Western; giving the impression that one needed to embrace Western culture to be Christian (Akrong 2013:177). Christianity being identified with Western Culture in this way made the gospel foreign to African culture and placed Western culture and African culture at opposite ends. This polarization of Western and African culture created the perception that African culture was primitive, pagan, and heathen, and so demanding the converts to Christianity to reject African culture in order to become Christian (Mugambi 2002:518). It implied

that one could not be African and Christian at the same time. This posed a problem for Africans converting to Christianity, presenting a question that became central to African Christianity: how to be African and Christian? The response to this question gave rise to different versions of Christianity in Africa. African Christians in missionary churches (Presbyterian, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Baptist) succumbed without resistance to the view that Christianity was incompatible with African culture (Akrong 2013:177). They did however find ways to maintain their African identity within the context of this dialectic view of the relationship between culture and Christianity.

At the turn of the twentieth century, a protest movement arose, revolting against missionary churches and their views about African culture. This movement was fuelled by the translation of the Bible into various African languages which resulted in African converts interpreting the Bible from their own perspectives (Akrong 2013:178). This led to Africans discovering that the Bible world and culture was in many ways similar to the African world and culture. This discovery contributed to the emergence of African Independent Churches or African Indigenous Churches (AICs). Some scholars argue for the term 'African Initiated Churches' believing that it recognizes that Africans did not come up with their own churches only because of protest but that they were deliberate and purposeful in founding these churches (Chitando 2016:204). There are multiple factors that resulted in the emergence of AICs. African Initiated Christianity is a result of the interface between Christianity and African indigenous spirituality (Chitando 2016:204). It was established because of the need for cultural freedom and cultural identity during the colonial period (Mugambi 2002:517). African Initiated Christianity emerged as a religious response to the needs and concerns of African converts to Christianity. These needs and concerns were shaped by the African worldview and spirituality which was dismissed by missionary Christianity (Mbiti 1989:392, Akrong 2013:178, Van der Merwe 2016:565).

2.5.2 Christian perspectives of marriage

"As Christians, views of marriage are informed by scripture, but we always read scripture in a cultural context, and that context has caused Christian views on marriage to shift and change throughout the church's history." Methuen (2014:150)

2.5.2.1 Marriage through Christian history

As history proves, Christian marriage has not been a static institution. Marriage is a human institution rooted in the social context in which it is lived, therefore making it subject to the norms and expectations of that context (Methuen 2014:160). In the times of the early church, marriage was not a Christian institution, but a pagan institution. The Christian understanding of marriage was influenced by Greek, Roman and Jewish practices (Methuen 2014:153). Christians of the early church generally followed the traditional nuptial rites of the province they lived in. The early church, as the Roman Empire it existed under, considered marriage ceremonies as private family festivals which took place at home and not the church building (Ngundu 2011:38). Christian couples were however encouraged to celebrate their marriages in God-honouring ways by excluding such things as drinking, dancing, overeating (Ngundu 2011:39) as well as customs involving sacrifices to pagan gods or idolatry (Grubbs 1994:389).

As a result of these multiple influences, there was much controversy over the meaning and value of marriage in the second century church. Furthermore, Gnostic views (which either condemned marriage and any sexual experience or gave rights to all kinds of sexual liberties as long as procreation was avoided) and the mixed marriages between pagans and Christians forced the Church to work on its doctrine about marriage. In the second century, Clement of Alexandria constructed a doctrine that in the end had great influence in the formulation of the orthodox Christian teaching on marriage. Clement did not make use of Scripture in his doctrine but argued the goodness of marriage from his knowledge of Greek and Roman philosophy, particularly the Stoic doctrine of natural law (Quinn 1971:389). His teaching was that procreation is good since it is the first and obvious purpose

of the sex organs and since procreation is good, marriage is good (Quinn 1971:389). Since whatever is natural is good, when man uses sex for procreation, he uses it in a natural and therefore good way. In this way, Clement's position was able to uphold the value and meaning of procreation and marriage. Clement's high regard of marriage rather than virginity is unique to him since the majority of the Church Fathers were influenced by ascetical Gnosticism and Manichaeanism (Quinn 1971:390). They agreed that marriage was good, but believed virginity was better. According to Augustine, sex was connected to the transmission of the original sin and was permitted only for the purpose of procreation, not pleasure. Jerome went so far as commending virginity even within marriage. The tension between the valuing of marriage and the valuing of celibacy heightened from the fourth century. For medieval Christians, marriage was a second-best option since sex was inherently sinful (Methuen 2014:155). Marriage was necessary for society only because of its procreative function but because celibacy was better, good Christians kept their marriages as chaste as possible.

By the fourth century, a priestly blessing was part of the marriage celebrations where the Christian couple was prayed over by the bishop when he came to congratulate the couple at the end of the marriage feast at their home (Ngundu 2011:39). But by the 5th century, this priestly blessing was administered away from the home and in front of the church. During the medieval times the Roman Catholic Church, through its canon law, began to regulate marriages in Western Europe which resulted in marriages being regarded in ecclesiastical terms rather than just social terms (Ngundu 2011:40). In 1215, marriage was included in the definitive list of seven sacraments articulated by the Fourth Lateral Council that took place that year (Methuen 2014:15). As a sacrament, marriage is an epicentre of divine love and grace which come from beyond the couple, endowing the relationship with a supernatural bond of permanent and deepening affection (Thatcher 1999:9). It also means marriage is an encounter with God – it is a way in which human beings can meet God and share in divine life (Quinn 1971:396). Because of this understanding of marriage as a sacrament, the church claimed the right to preside over marriages.

The Protestant Reformation gave marriage a new importance. Renewed interest in the Bible saw development in the direction of a more positive view of marriage. This revival in biblical theology allowed the doctrine of marriage to be grounded on Scripture more than Greek philosophy. Marriage in the Bible is founded upon the idea of the covenant between God and his people (Quinn 1971:391). In Scripture portions like Hosea and Ephesians, marriage is presented as a model for the relationship between the Church and God, founded on love (Methuen 2014:154). In the biblical tradition, sex is an expression of love instead of sinful and dirty (Quinn 1971:394). Sex is associated with love and not procreation in books like Songs of Solomon. Love is prioritized over legality (natural law) or biology (procreation). The biblical revival in theology drew us away from a focus on the outward signs of marriage towards the inner and more spiritual dimensions of the marriage relationship. This balances out the theological negativism of the past generations and elevates marriage to a more fitting position. It is important to note that the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century (Martin Luther, John Calvin etc.) challenged and rejected the sacramental theology marriage, inevitably creating a legal vacuum which made developing a new courts system an urgent need (Ngundu 2011:42). The many ideas that Protestants produced eventually contributed to the development of civil marriages in the Western world.

2.5.2.2   Biblical concepts of marriage

This study will deal with biblical concepts of marriage from a Reformed perspective. A Reformed perspective holds a revelation-historical hermeneutical approach. This approach recognizes the divine inspiration of Scripture and its authority for Christian life and faith (Vorster 2008:464). It acknowledges a distinction between descriptive and prescriptive parts of Scripture. Descriptive parts are that which narrate a certain historical event of custom while the prescriptive parts establish ethical principles and norms for modern-day behaviour (Vorster 2008:465). This approach also observes that a passage or verse must be read and understood within the framework of the whole revelation (Vorster 2008:465).

Based on this revelation-historical approach, the biblical idea of marriage has the creation order as its foundation. This makes the first three chapters of Genesis the origin and prototype of marriage (Vorster 2008:466). This is attested to by the fact that both Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament refer to it in their teachings about marriage. I will discuss a few of the main principles regarding marriage according to the creation order in light of the scope of this study.

2.5.2.2.1 Mutuality and Complementarity

Marriage is rooted in God's creative act of making humanity in his image as male and female (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:22). Them being created in God's image and likeness gives mankind worth, dignity, and significance (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:23; Vorster 2008:488). This makes human life indispensable. Them being created in the image of God also means that they are created to live in fellowship with God and with one another (Vorster 2008:488). God creates them to be joint stewards who rule the earth for God. The creation of man and woman in the image of God is the foundation of equality between husband and wife. God created male and female equally with only a functional differentiation in the sense that they have different obligations (Vorster 2008:469). As Talbert (2001) states, "men and women are created different as sexual beings and equal as persons" (Talbert 2001:16). The differences between man and wife are complementary. Genesis 1 offers a vision of the complementarity of men and women in the increase of humankind and in ensuring the welfare and the prosperity of creation (Methuen 2014:151). In relation to God's mandate for humanity to be fruitful and multiply, filling and subduing the earth (Genesis 1:28), the woman is a suitable partner both in procreation (Genesis 2:24) and in the earth's domestication (Genesis 1:28) (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:25).

While Genesis 1 describes the creation of male and female in God's image, Genesis 2 provides details on the order and orientation of the creation of man and woman. God creates man first and then creates and presents the woman to the man in order to supply the man's need for companionship. Before the woman was created, the

man had already begun exercising his mandate to subdue the earth by naming the animals (Genesis 2:19-20). There is no biblical evidence that Adam was conscious of being alone or discontent in being alone (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:25). God took the initiative to make a 'suitable helper' for the man out of his sovereign will and based on man's inherit need for companionship (Genesis 2:18).

Being a 'suitable helper' suggests that the woman is familiar to the man in a way that none of the animals are (Genesis 2:19-20). This is why the man refers to her as 'bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh' (Genesis 2:23). It also suggests that the woman is placed alongside the man as his assistant (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:25). According to Köstenberger and Jones, the woman being assigned as the man's helper places the woman under the man's overall charge (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:25). But Vorster (2008) argues that the notion of the subordination of the woman in marriage on the basis of her being a 'helper' cannot find support from a revelation-historical understanding of marriage in Biblical theology (Vorster 2008:469). According to him, the woman assists the man as a partner on the basis of co-operation and not subordination since she bears the same image of God (Vorster 2008:469). The fact that the term 'helper' (Hebrew: *ezer*) in the Old Testament is repeatedly applied to God himself (cf. Exodus 18:4, Psalm 33:20, Psalm 146:5) who is not subordinate to those he helps, is a strong argument from those who deny female subordination as being rooted in the creative order. But Köstenberger and Jones (2010) continue to argue that the application of the expression 'helper' to God in the Old Testament does not remove the woman's functional subordination to the man in terms of role distinction (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:26). They point out that the instances where God is referred to as humanity's helper prove that God may at times chose to subordinate himself and his interests to those of human beings by caring for them, without affecting his divinity (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:26).

The understanding of the woman's subordination is confirmed by New Testament apostolic interpretation. The apostle Paul's comments on Genesis 1-3 repeatedly

base the man's responsibility in the marriage and family in the fact that he was created first and the woman was made from him (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, 1 Timothy 2:11-13). The 'household codes' make a unanimous call for the wife to submit to the husband (Ephesians 5:22,24, Colossians 3:18, 1 Peter 3:1,5). Man was also the one to name the woman with a name derived from his own (Genesis 2:23), which implies authority (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:24). However, authority does not necessarily mean dominion. As Ephesians 5:25-27 will point out, the husband uses his authority to love and serve his wife. In fact, man dominated over the wife because of sin. Domination in the relations between men and women is "evidence of fallenness" (Talbert 2001:19). The fall of humanity into sin in Genesis 3 resulted in a deviation from the divine ideal of marriage. The loving harmony that was to characterize the relationship of husband and wife was replaced by a pattern of struggle in which the woman wants to control her husband who responds by unduly asserting his authority (Genesis 3:16) — often by either passively forcing her into action or actively dominating her (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:27). Christian theology asserts that through incarnation, God seeks to restore his intent for marriage by redeeming humans from sin which corrupts the relations of man and woman (Talbert 2001:26). Biblical marriage is therefore rooted in mutuality where equality and distinctness, complementarity and submission/authority must be balanced.

2.5.2.2.2 Monogamy

God establishes marriage as an exclusively heterosexual monogamous relationship. This is seen in how God only made one "suitable helper" for Adam, and she was female (Onwurah 1982:111, Köstenberger and Jones 2010:25, Ngundu 2011:45). However, after mankind falls into sin, God's ideal of monogamy was not consistently upheld. Within six generations, the Bible records the first polygamous marriage through Lamech. In addition to Lamech, Abraham (Genesis 16:3), Esau (Genesis 26:34; 28:9), Jacob (Genesis 29:30), Gideon (Judges 8:30), Elkanah (1 Samuel 1:1–2), David (2 Samuel 3:2–5; 5:13), and Solomon (1 Kings 11:3) are amongst those who had more than one wife. No explicit rationale is given in Scripture by those who were polygamous, but possible reasons include ensuring

financial increase and stability, expressing authority and power, and increasing the number of one's offspring (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:33). These accounts of polygamy need to be understood as descriptive material detailing the result of the fall of mankind into sin while the creative order remains prescriptive, expressing God's intended will for marriage (Vorster 2008:466).

In contrast to the tarnished image of the marriage relationship experienced by Israel in the Old Testament where polygamy was popular and the wife was subjugated to the husband, Jesus states in the New Testament (cf. Matthew 19:8) that it was not so from the beginning (Onwurah 1982:76). The creative order being prescriptive is further seen in how it forms the foundation of marital relations not only in the gospels, but also by Paul's writings of the household codes which all present a monogamous understanding of marriage (Methuen 2014:152). The sin and disorder produced by polygamy in the lives of Old Testament characters who practiced it is further testament that it was a departure from God's plan for marriage (Köstenberger and Jones 2010:33). Polygamous marriages have an in-built potential for tension, jealousy, and endless squabbling because they are unable to satisfy the basic human need between two partners to completely belong to each other (Dwane 1975:235).

2.5.2.2.3 Oneness

Marriage is a sexual union as the two becomes one flesh (Genesis 2:24). The oneness in flesh is however beyond the physical terrain as it also means that the two people share each other's lives in a complete and dedicated manner (Vorster 2008:467). 'One flesh' means that it not only involves physical union but also a unity of spiritual, moral, and intellectual facets of the husband and wife (Ryrie and Steele 1981:178). This oneness also implies equality between the married partners where the woman is not inferior to the man but has equal worth as the man (Berglund 1975:20). But before such a bond of oneness can form, the man ought to leave his father and mother to cleave to his wife. This leaving is not restricted to a geographic move but speaks to the man's complete dedication to his wife, putting her needs

and their needs as a unit above all others, even his parents (Matthews 1996:223). 'Leaving' does not imply forsaking one's parents and is not a licence to abandon responsibilities towards one's parents, but only means being closer to one's spouse than to any other person (Berglund 1975:18, Baloyi 2013a:50). It is an emphasis of how priorities change once one is married. The Hebrew word for "cleave" (*dabaq*) is an exclusive one and brings to mind oneness and unity – a belonging together which implies exclusiveness, opposite to the polygamous union where total commitment is interfered with (Berglund 1975:19).

The man and wife being one also speaks to the permanency of the union between them (Brubaker 2010:33). When Jesus comments on Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:1-12, he makes it clear that marriage is a life-binding covenant where the man and woman are one flesh, a union that was not to be broken. Divorce is therefore seen as sinful and inconsistent with the original institution of marriage as reflected in the creative order (Onwurah 1982:77, Ngundu 2011:45).

2.5.2.2.4 Function

According to the creative order, marriage has two main functions: companionship and procreation. Marriage is introduced as an antidote to isolation (cf. Genesis 2:18). It was not good in God's eyes for man to be on his own because man's divine norm is not isolation but community (Baloyi 2013a:48). This is because humans, created in God's image and likeness, express the relational dynamic of God. The doctrine of Trinity asserts that God is 'community' since the triune God is comprised of the fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Grenz 2000:179). Marriage serves the purpose of supplying the lack man has alone. Man alone lacks what the mate can supply so that together they make a complete whole (Ryrie and Steele 1981:177).

Another purpose of marriage which can be derived from the Bible is procreation (cf. Genesis 1:28). Procreation is however not the sole objective and ultimate goal of marriage (Berglund 1975:14). Vorster (2008) argues that it is a secondary purpose of marriage as procreation as a primary purpose of marriage poses ethical problems as it makes childless marriages inferior (Vorster 2008:466). Berglund (1975) rightly identifies the place of children in marriage when he states that children originate from the unity of man and woman through the oneness of the flesh, but they are not the focal point of the marriage (Berglund 1975:22). In Christian circles, childlessness is therefore not considered as grounds for dissolving a marriage or entering into a polygamous marriage (Mugambi 2002:534).

2.5.3   Christianity and African marriage

Catholic and Protestant views of marriage became distinctive attitudes and doctrines of Western Christianity which missionaries imposed on Africans who converted to Christianity (Ngundu 2011:43). Christianity as taught by the missionaries emphasised that the extended family had no place in a marriage. Christian marriage was understood to be an arrangement based on the free choice of individuals, not an agreement between families (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:366, Krige 1981:151). This understanding, together with requiring a newly married couple to build and occupy their own home instead of living in a patrilocal setting, encouraged a nuclear family pattern and discouraged the involvement of extended family in the marriage (Krige 1981:151). It is not only the involvement of living family members that was discouraged, but also the involvement of dead family members. The involvement of the dead in the marriage process was discouraged on the basis of ancestral veneration being equated to idolatry and therefore anti-Christian (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:369). This discussion will further focus on three areas of Christianity's impact on African marriage which are the chief marriage norms which were absolutized: absolute monogamy, absolute indissolubility, and the celebration of marriage in a form recognized by the Church (Hastings 1973:5).

2.5.3.1   Absolute Monogamy

Christian teaching by the missionaries discouraged polygamy. This is because Missionary Christianity viewed the creation order as the basis of the theology of marriage. At creation, marriage is understood to be an exclusively heterosexual and monogamous relationship (Onwurah 1982:111, Köstenberger and Jones 2010:25, Ngundu 2011:45). The first Anglican missionaries in Western Nigeria in the 1850's were the first to reach a resolution about the line of action towards polygamy in the church: *"while the wives of a polygamist, if believed to be true converts, might be received to baptism, since they were usually involuntary victims of the custom, no man could be admitted who retained more than one wife"* (Stock 1899:111). In 1856, Henry Venn, the chief secretary of the Church Missionary Society between 1841 and 1872, produced a memorandum on polygamy which was in support of the position West African missionaries had taken (Hastings 1973:12). The common rule was that a husband of a polygamous marriage who wanted to become a member of the church must abandon all wives except the first wife (Wilson 1981:139, Mugambi 2002:528). This threatened the welfare of the wives and children set for abandonment. Unknowingly, the church was promoting divorce without responsibility being taken for the deserted wives and children (Dwane 1975:232, Guy 2004:95, Baloyi 2013b:174). This was directly opposed to traditional African society which institutionally prioritized the wellbeing of wives and their children.

Soon enough, men like Bishop John William Colenso – the first bishop of the new Anglican diocese of Natal - challenged this rule. He argued that this policy was "unwarranted by the Scriptures, unsanctioned by Apostolic example and authority, condemned by common reasons and sense of right and altogether unjustifiable" (Hastings 1973:13, Dwane 1975:225). Such arguments were not entertained, being strongly opposed and repeatedly rejected at different congresses and conferences. Together with the Anglican church, other mission churches held to the same general rule without exception. This policy pushed polygamist converts toward new independent congregations, the African Initiated Churches which accommodated polygamists as full members. African Initiated Churches embraced an African epistemology which recognized both monogamous and polygamous unions as

indissoluble (Baloyi 2013b:174). In recent years, more voices have risen questioning whether monogamy truly is a demand of Christianity since the Bible does not provide a firm foundation for limiting marriage to monogamy (Falen 2008:54, Twene 2019:16). Scholars like van Eck (2020) believe monogamy is not a biblical requirement but is instead a social construct owing to Roman Imperial beliefs (van Eck 2020:2).

2.5.3.2   Absolute Indissolubility

Although African marriage was intended to be lifelong, it was also in principle dissoluble among a majority of African communities (Hastings 1973:35). The general grounds justifying separation in African societies appears to be the 'breakdown of marriage' connected to domestic violence, non-compatibility, disagreements between co-wives, or charges of witchcraft and adultery (Hastings 1973:35, Makwanise and Masuku 2016:3). Where ill-treated, a woman would run back to her own people, but a husband could also send his wife away on claims of laziness, witchcraft, adultery, or even infertility. Infertility, however, was often responded to through the taking of a second wife rather than divorce. Divorce, however, is a rare occurrence where bride-wealth is of high social importance since it would mean the repayment or repossession of the bride-wealth. Because this is not preferred, great efforts are made by the families to reconcile couples who are considering divorce.

Even though the Christian missionaries resolved to demand a polygamist husband to abandon all wives except the first wife in order to attain Church membership, missionaries discouraged divorce in their teaching. The indissolubility of Christian marriage is mainly founded on Jesus' comments on Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:1-12. Because Christian marriage here is understood to be life-long union, divorce is seen as inconsistent with the original marriage as reflected in the creation order (Onwurah 1982:77, Ngundu 2011:45). In his commentary, Jesus however gives one exception for divorce – adultery – the same grounds for divorce in African marriage. This points to a commonality between Christian marriage and African marriage. Not

only is both Christian and African marriage intended to be lifelong, both systems of marriage share one common ground for divorce.

2.5.3.3   Form of marriage celebration

In African society, the criteria for the validity of a marriage was determined by customary practice, particularly the payment of bride-wealth. The introduction of church marriage by missionaries lead to customary marriage being viewed as invalid and illegal (Ngundu 2011:37). Traditional marriage was considered an inferior form of marriage because through the payment of bride-wealth it was considered to turn a noble union into a business transaction (Junod 1941:31). Christian missionaries emphasized a church wedding for a marriage to be recognized (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:368). A Christian couple was only considered as married and therefore legalized to consummate the marriage after the church wedding ceremony conducted at the church. But since African culture considers a couple married after the fulfilment of traditional marriage rites (Onyima 2015:72), this created a dilemma for African Christian couples who were expected by their relatives to go home together immediately after the traditional ceremony and consummate the marriage. It also raises the question: when is an African Christian couple recognized as married? It has also made getting married very costly for African Christians as they technically had to get married twice, a task which bears daunting economic challenges (Onyima 2015:172).

2.6 Conclusion

From the literature review, one can see that the subject of African culture and Christian marriage is an extensive subject. African cultural values like communalism permeate every aspect of life in African society, including marriage. The communal nature of African society means African marriage is not a private affair but a family affair prone to family involvement. Because of the principle of social duty within communal society, marriage is understood to be a social duty, undertaken to preserve the family line through procreation, hence childbearing is central to African marriage and polygamy favoured because it ensures more

offspring. All these traits of African marriage have been challenged by the influence of modernism, urbanization, and Christianity in Africa, resulting in the erosion of African cultural values which govern marriage and family life.

Chapter 3: Fieldwork

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of communalism on modern African Christian couples living in urban South Africa. In this chapter, I describe the field in which this research was conducted by explaining the sample and outlining the profile of each participant. I also describe the research process as well as the data analysis procedure and presentation of the data. The themes of the study are then discussed at length.

The primary research question addressed in this study is how African communalism influences the marriages of modern African Christian couples in urban South Africa. The objectives of the study are to:

a) establish the views and experiences of modern African Christian couples concerning communalism in marriage,

b) determine if family involvement has a negative or positive effect on the couple's relationship,

c) determine the relationship between the couple's views and experiences of communalism and their Christian faith.

3.2 Sampling

Even though the participants were not sourced from one particular denomination, all the participants indicated that they were practicing Christians and had recently attended a worship service either live or online. Practicing Christians are self-identified Christians who agree strongly that their faith is very important in their life and have attended a church worship service within the past month (Barna Group

2019). As born-again Christians, the participants belonged to independent denominations that comprise "a diverse coalition of Evangelicals, Charismatics and Pentecostals, who share a belief in the infallibility of Scripture and, more importantly, stress the centrality of a 'born-again' experience" (Maxwell 2006:403). To become born-again can be described as to experience personal salvation (Lindhardt 2010:243). It is a "radical conversion, a transformative experience in which a person gives his or her life to Jesus Christ" (van Klinken 2012:217). Born-again Christianity cuts across historic denominations and creates new denominations (Maxwell 2006:403) but because of its roots in missionary Christianity, it is characterized by Western ethnocentrism. This results in born-again Christians prioritizing their faith over African culture and as a result, neglecting traditional African values and customs (Mugambi 2002:519, Balcomb 2016:121).

My sample consisted of six heterosexual couples. All the participants were black South Africans between the ages of 24 and 35 years old. This was in line with the research criteria which sought out participants who were Millennials. A Millennial is anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock 2019) i.e., ages 23 to 38 years in 2019 when this study began. The couples varied between newly married couples and those who had been married for up to seven years. It is notable that some marriages of these participants are fairly short in duration. This can be attributed to the age of the participants which was limited to respondents below the age of 38. This in light of the fact that the average South African only marries after the age of 31. This is based on the latest statistics which put the median age at first marriage for civil marriages in South Africa at 35 years for men and 32 years for women (Statistics South Africa 2021:4).

All participants resided in an urban area in either Gauteng or Mpumalanga. The three couples in Mpumalanga resided in suburbs in towns while the other three couples resided in suburbs in cities. Most of the respondents fit the middle-class profile. The middle-class consists of those individuals who own skills and education allowing them opportunities for income in the market. The middle-class is therefore

characterised by the working class with an income affording them a residence in the suburbs, a car, expenditure on leisure and access to debt among other things (Magubane 2016:14). All the participants not only resided in urban areas but were professionals that either possessed a tertiary education or trade skill. Table 1 below reflects the profile of each participant.

Table 1

Participant's Profile

	DURATION MARRIED	PARTICIPANT	AGE	FAMILY DYNAMICS
COUPLE 1	7 years	Husband	33	Married parents, both Christian.
		Wife	35	Mother deceased. Father present, Christian.
COUPLE 2	7 months	Husband	35	Married parents, both Christian.
		Wife	28	Married parents. Traditional father, Christian mother.
COUPLE 3	5 years	Husband	29	Parents separated. Issues with paternal family.
		Wife	29	Married parents. Traditional father, Christian mother.
COUPLE 4	1 year	Husband	34	Mother deceased, elder brothers as seniors.
		Wife	33	Father deceased, mother present.
COUPLE 5	3 years	Husband	28	Married parents, both Christians.
		Wife	24	Mother deceased, father absent. Issues with maternal family.

				Adoptive parents as seniors, both Christian.
COUPLE 6	1 year	Husband	35	Both parents deceased. Aunts as seniors, traditional.
		Wife	28	Married parents, both Christian

3.3 Research process

3.3.1   Semi-structured one-to-one interviews

This study is an empirical study which adopts a qualitative approach. The primary task of qualitative research is to describe the lived realities of individuals or groups in a particular setting (Swinton and Mowat 2016:43). Interviewing is the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research (Greeff 2011:342) since qualitative research is narrative-focused (Swinton and Mowat 2006:35). The telling of stories, their accurate recording, transcription, and analysis forms the heart of qualitative research (Swinton and Mowat 2016:37). An interview is an interaction where the participant tells his or her story while the interviewer tries to create meaning from the story.

I chose semi-structured interviews as my data collection method since semi-structured interviews are organised around areas of particular interest while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth (cf. Greeff 2011:348). This kind of interview allowed me to gain a clear idea of the participants' perceptions and accounts of communalism in their marriage. While I had a set of predetermined questions on an interview schedule for each interview, the schedule only guided the interview and did not dictate to it (cf. Greeff 2011:352). The participants shared their stories guided by the questions with the flexibility allowing for them to introduce an issue I as the researcher may not have thought of.

The couples were sourced using social media marketing. The post was advertised through sharing with my connections on various social media platforms. The couples had to meet the following criteria:

- black South Africans,
- between the ages of twenty-three and thirty-eight years old,
- practicing Christians,
- married for no longer than nine years,
- residing in an urban area in either Gauteng or Mpumalanga.

Couples who showed interest in participating in the study by responding to the online adverts were provided with an information sheet (Appendix A) via email. Couples who agreed to participate in the study were then provided with consent forms (Appendix B) to sign and return before their scheduled interview.

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic presented a few ethical issues with regards to my chosen interview method. As a researcher, I am ethically obligated to change the nature of my research rather than expose my respondents to the faintest possibility of physical or emotional harm that I am aware of. Because face-to-face interviews had the potential of putting the participants' health at risk since the Covid-19 virus spreads through close contact, interviews were conducted online using Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams was the preferred tool for data collection since the use of online tools such as Zoom, WhatsApp and Skype had proven to create privacy and confidentiality concerns. Participants were duly notified about this change in the interview method.

I recorded the interviews using the 'record' function on Microsoft Teams for the online interviews. The interviews varied in length. Semi-structured interviews generally last for a considerable amount of time as they can become intense and involved (cf. Greeff 2011:353). Although I had an estimation of ninety minutes per interview, the length of the shortest interview was sixty-five minutes while the two longest interviews took one hundred minutes each. In some cases, the interviews

took long due to poor network connectivity as we would have to wait for the connection to stabilize before continuing. As soon as each interview was concluded, I manually transcribed and simultaneously translated the interview as most participants would interchange between English and isiZulu.

3.3.1.1 Interview Schedule

A pilot interview was conducted in order to ensure that the questions were understandable, that they were set in a logical order, and that they achieved the research objective. The pilot interview was also intended to test my ability to conduct an interview successfully. The couple used for the pilot interview met the criteria since they were a black married couple living in a small town. They were practicing Christians who had been married for five years and were both Millennials (the husband was 33 years old, and the wife was 27 years old). The pilot interview revealed that some of the questions on the interview schedule required double answers. As a result, these questions were separated to be single questions. The pilot interview also exposed my inability to ensure that I retrieved rich data from the interview. I had to learn to limit the respondents from responding with short answers by prompting them throughout the interview.

Each interview was divided into three parts. The first two parts were individual questions which the participants answered individually i.e., in the absence of their partner. This was to allow them to be as honest as possible, particularly about their experiences with their in-laws. The third part of the interview was joint questions which the couples answered together as a couple. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the couples using an interview schedule of a total of fifteen open-ended questions:

1. How involved were your families during the marriage process? Please provide examples.

2. What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's involvement in your marriage process?

3. Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

4. What was your parents' involvement in terms of who you chose to marry?

5. At present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Please provide examples.

6. What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families' current involvement in your marriage?

7. Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

8. Which cultural acts/ceremonies did you have to perform as part of the marriage process (e.g., payment of ilobolo)?

9. What is your understanding of these acts/ceremonies?

10. What are your views about these cultural acts/ceremonies?

11. What is your understanding of the phrase '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'?

12. What would you say this phrase means for marriage?

13. What would you say is the role of family in a marriage?

14. Genesis 2:24 says 'The man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife…', what is your understanding of this verse?

15. In your view, does Genesis 2:24 contradict or agree with what the concept of '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' means when it comes to marriage? Please explain.

The interview questions were designed to reach the research objectives and answer the research question. The respondents displayed maturity in responding to the questions, providing quality reflective responses. Young as some of the

respondents were, they displayed a wholistic understanding of marriage – not only viewing it as an event but understanding that marriage was a life-long process.

3.4 Analysis and presentation of data

3.4.1 Data analysis procedure

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data collected (Schurink et al. 2011:397). It is the transformation of data into findings. Qualitative data analysis actually begins while in the field collecting data as ideas for making sense of the data emerge (Patton 2002:436), otherwise known as preliminary analysis. Qualitative data analysis cannot be associated with structured, mechanical, and technical procedures but is a process of inductive reasoning, thinking, and theorising (Schurink et al. 2011:399). The process of analysing qualitative data is not a linear one, but it is rather circular and reflective (Swinton and Mowat 2016:267). I used Thematic Analysis to analyse the data collected. because this method allowed me to see and make sense of the respondent's shared meanings and experiences since thematic analysis identifies what is common to the way a topic is talked about and makes sense of those commonalities (Braun and Clarke 2006:57).

Conducting thematic analysis involves a six-step process: "familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report" (Kiger and Varpio 2020:1). In my analysis of the data I collected, I followed these six steps and also adopted the principles outlined by Schurink et al. (2011), namely:

- After conducting each interview, I transcribed each interview in detail (refer to appendix' D to I for the transcripts). Transcribing the interviews myself allowed me the opportunity to familiarize myself with the data and by so doing, I generated emergent insights.
- I then read and re-read the transcripts in order to get a feel of the database, taking notes as I did so.

- I then reduced the data into smaller and more manageable units. I did this by systematically working through each transcript, identifying meaningful units, and applying open coding. Open coding involves the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorising data (cf. Schurink et al. 2011:412). Coding was first done manually, then electronically through ATLASti.9, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (refer to appendix C for a summary of the code list).

- I then discovered categories by grouping codes that seemed to pertain to the same phenomenon.

- I then grouped the categories into emerging themes through selective coding, which is a process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, and validating those relationships (Schurink et al. 2011:413).

3.5 Themes of the study

Themes emerged by systematically working through the data, assigning open codes, and grouping similar data into categories. I eventually grouped the categories into emerging themes. Analysis was conducted through the research objectives that guided the research process. The diagram below (Figure 4) represents the themes of the study, grouped according to each research objective. This section will unpack each theme and also provide an interpretation of the themes supported by either the context or literature. The discussion of themes will be structured according to the research objectives and will focus on the themes of family involvement, cultural practices, communal society, Christian faith influence, as well as the effect of family involvement on the marital relationship.

3.5.1 Research findings
3.5.1.1 Findings from responses to objective one

Research objective one: to establish the views and experiences of modern African Christian couples concerning African communalism in marriage. The participants sharing their views and experiences concerning communalism in marriage showed the emergence of a number of pertinent themes such as a vivid description of their family's involvement, the cultural practices they were obligated to perform and a

description of the communal society they exist within. The following sections will unpack each theme, providing evidence with description.
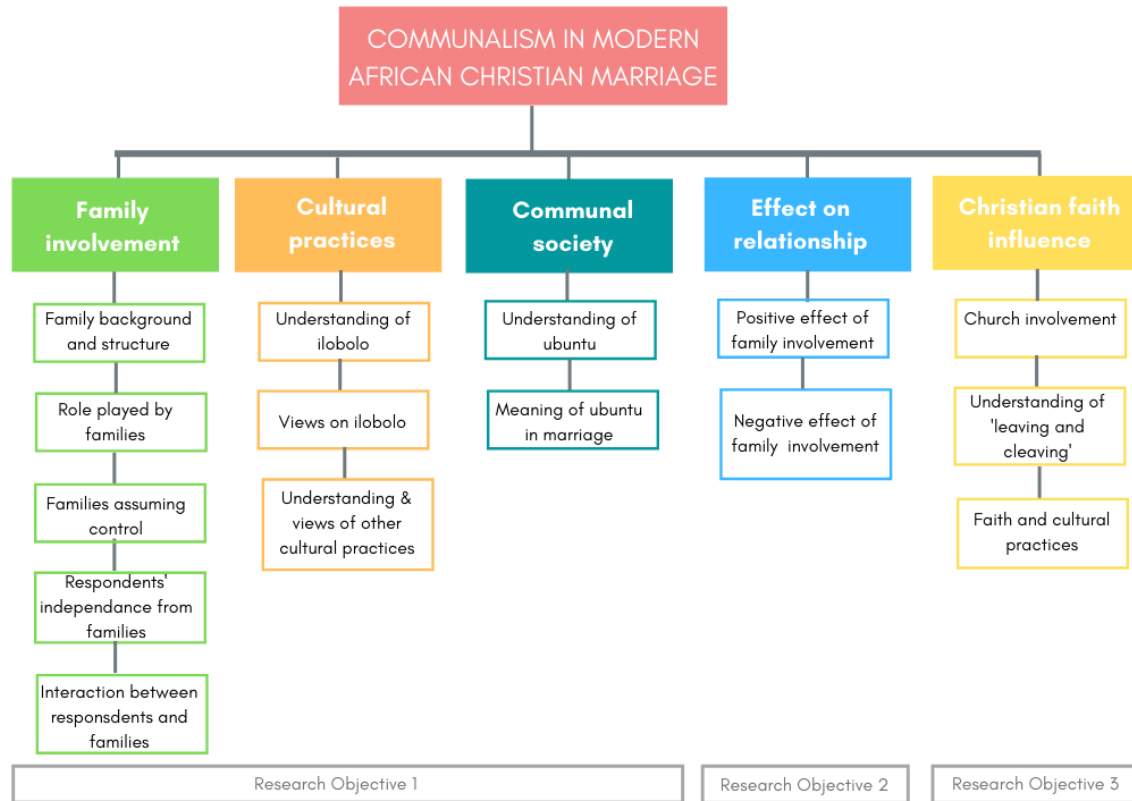
Figure 4 Diagram representing themes of the study

3.5.1.1.1 Theme 1: Family involvement

In order to understand the couple's views and experiences of communalism, respondents were asked to explain how their families were involved during the marriage process and currently in their marriage. The interviews commenced with respondents describing their families' involvement and the advantages and disadvantages of that involvement. Through the constant comparison of the codes identified from the data, codes were merged together based on similarity. Analysis of these codes revealed five significant sub-themes related to the theme of family involvement.

These sub-themes held constant across all respondents, namely:

- The respondent's family background and structure

- The role the families played

- The control the families assumed

- The respondent's independence from their families

- The kind of interaction respondents experienced with their families

Each of these sub-themes is analysed in detail below.

Referencing System

Respondent's gender where H is husband and W is wife

(R1 W L20)

Respondent number   Line number on transcript
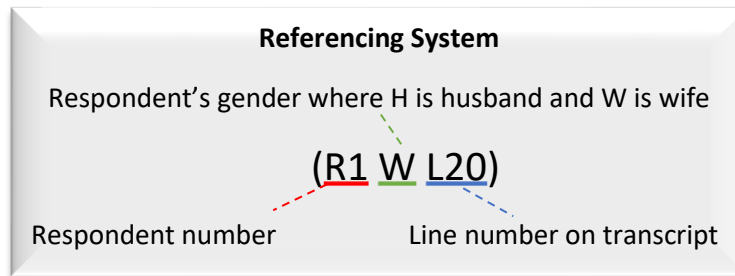
Figure 5 Diagram representing the referencing system

I have made use of the above referencing system (Figure 5) to clearly identify the speaker of each quotation. 'R' stands for 'respondent' while the number after the 'R' represents the respondent number. The letter following that, either H or W, indicates the gender of the speaker as either husband or wife. 'L' stands for 'line' and the number following the 'L' is the line number as reflected on the transcript.

3.5.1.1.1.1 Family background and structure

In this section, I will explore the kind of families the respondents came from and how that influenced the way in which the families were involved in their marriage.

As the respondents responded to the question of how involved their families were, a majority of the respondents brought up the issue of their family background and other characteristics of their family system. Respondents described how their families' involvement was influenced by the stability of the family's structure, the principle of seniority within the family structure and the household's belief system.

In the following quote, Respondent 6H explains how his unstable upbringing, as a result of his parents' death, has influenced the way in which his family is involved in his marriage. In comparison to his wife's family where both parents are alive and

actively involved in their marriage, his family is limited in their involvement because of not being a well-structured family that has advice to offer in terms of how to build a family.

> R6H: "So because **I come from a family where there were no parents, there wasn't anything stable, we took care of ourselves** as kids. So, them not being involved, and I can't blame them much because even if they are to be involved, **what will they be involved with when it comes to building a family because we grew up with them, they don't know how to build up that family**. So, me demanding them to be involved won't help with anything…" (R6HL123)

This statement concurs with Respondent 3H who acknowledges that his family, which is less structured because of an absent father, seems less involved in their marriage in comparison to his wife's family which is more structured than his.

> R3H: "I think with that question a question I should ask my wife is, with how my family is, how does she receive it. Because I may say I'm fine with it but we come from different families. **She comes from a structured family with a mom and a dad, and I know from her side of the family, the family is still together, the extended family, they communicate, they throw functions together**. So, question will be **with my family seeming almost absent**, does she see that as something that's negative where maybe she sees as they just don't care and they just letting us to live our lives because they just don't care." (R3HL245)

It seems that respondents from less structured families experience less involvement from their families in comparison to their spouses who come from more stable, structured families. This could be attributed to the fact that families who have managed to successfully build their families have more advice and guidance to offer their adult children who are married. Family involvement, therefore, appears to be influenced by the experiences of the family in terms of family formation.

Seniority within the African family structure came to light when respondents mentioned the motive behind involving their families in the marriage process and

how they interacted with their families during the process. Respondent 5W reflected on the need to involve her estranged biological family so that she would not be labelled as a disrespectful child.

> R5W: *"**I involved them so they have no questions**, **none whatsoever that 'this child got married without telling anyone**, she eloped or we don't even know what's happening.' I think the advantage is that for us we started on a clean slate**, respecting everyone honouring anyone, even though it was hard to do that** – I cried so much during those days, but I think the advantage is just starting on a clean slate **without anyone pointing fingers at us or blaming us for doing things as kids**, even as much as we wanted what we wanted, and we knew what we wanted, but **we still gave them room to give them honour and respect**." (R5WL58).*

It is apparent that respondents view themselves as children, regardless of the fact that in the African context, marriage is understood to be an avenue into the status of adulthood (cf. Preston-Whyte 1981:160, de Haas 1984:137, Ansell 2001:703, Mohlabane et al. 2019:156). This is most likely because family members of an African household are ranked into a graded sequence according to their relative seniority (cf. Bascom 1942:37). Therefore, adult children who are fully adults because they are now married are still considered to be children in the ranks of seniority and are subject to parental authority. Thus, adult children may not take decisions about marriage independently without consulting senior family members because they remain limited to a specific place of being juniors in the social hierarchy. Respondent 3W explained how the hierarchal nature of African culture dictated the communication lines during the marriage process.

> R3W: *"…because of **how hierarchal our culture is** in a way, you know **as children you can't just call a meeting to say whatever you want, you have to do it in a certain way.**" (R3WL38).*

Respondents appear to be prohibited from doing things according to their preferences because there are protocols that they have to observe. The hierarchical nature of traditional African society limits the individual from taking initiative since they must wait upon seniority (cf. Van der Walt 1988:11). The freedom to do things

according to their desires is curtailed by the expectation to respect and please elders as the statement below illustrates.

> R2W: *"At some point I felt that **some of the things that we had to do were things that they actually wanted us to do and not things that we wanted**. Obviously, certain things **we had to do them just to make them happy as our parents because that's the expectation from them**." (R2WL1)*

As they described their family's involvement, respondents also mentioned their household's belief system in terms of either Christian faith or African traditional beliefs. The parents' belief system influenced the manner in which they were involved in the respondents' marriage, particularly in terms of their expectations. For Respondent 2W, her father being traditional meant he already expected grandchildren, even though they were only seven months into the marriage.

> R2W: *"The other thing I feel my family is just too involved in, I don't know, I guess **my dad is just a traditional man** (laughs) **he believes that you don't get married without a reason to have a child.** So, he's been asking 'when are you guys…?' (laughs) My dad has been long awaiting a grandchild, so ya. **He's been making these weird comments about a grandchild and everything.** And for me I feel **it's another pressure that I don't need right now** in my life because **we had decided when that time will come for us** but having that pressure coming from my family all the time…" (R2WL66)*

This father's expectation is founded upon the African traditional understanding that marriage is mainly aimed at procreation (cf. Baloyi 2014:22) because it is vital to the preservation of a family's lineage and culture (cf. Welch 1933:22). For the traditional African, a marriage without children is incomplete (cf. Mbiti 1969:133). The birth of a marriage's first child, particularly a son, marks a marriage as successful. It is no wonder then that a traditional parent would quickly anticipate the birth of his grandchildren. But we see how this understanding is in contrast with the respondent, who is seen to feel that decisions around children are personal decisions that should not involve their families. This could be a result of the kind of independent decision-making that Christian marriage advocates for based on the Biblical concept of 'a man shall leave his father and mother'. It also might be a result of the respondent's

preference for a more modern approach to family life which is a nuclear family model.

The aunt of Respondent 6H expected him to perform the ritual of reporting the bride to the ancestors on the day of the wedding.

> R6H: *"I remember when we had to leave home, one aunt of mine said that 'in order for my marriage to work properly, the bride has to be reported to the ancestors, because if the bride isn't reported, you won't have peace in your marriage because the ancestors don't know her…All those things that they wanted to introduce… I told some of them that I'm Christian and can't do certain things."* (R6HL58)

According to African traditional beliefs, the blessing and success of a marriage lies with the family's ancestors (cf. Posel and Rudwick 2014:63). The reporting of the bride to her new ancestors is significant because the notification of the ancestors with every step taken in the marriage process invites the ancestor's blessing. For the family member who holds traditional African views, this is an important step in the marriage process that contributes to the success of the marriage. But for the born-again African Christian respondent who believes that the marital blessing comes from God and is discouraged from any interaction with the dead, such rituals cannot be participated in. For the conservative African Christian, ancestral veneration is considered to be idolatrous (cf. Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:369) and therefore a sin against God. Again, we see how the traditional views and expectations of families can contradict with the respondents' Christian values.

As to be expected, it is a different story for respondents who share a common belief with the household authorities. For Respondent 2H, who has Christian parents, his parents' expectation was that he would marry a fellow Christian since they would not be able to accept a daughter-in-law who was not a Christian.

> R2H: *"They only told, they only advised me that I should choose a Christian person. That's the only thing they said to me – a born again Christian. That's the only thing they said to me. As to who…They only told me that they wouldn't be able to accept a non-Christian person. They*

> ***only pressurized us to get married to Christian people. People of the
> same kind****.” (R2HL176)*

This strict expectation is most likely based on the Christian principle of 'not being unequally yoked with unbelievers' as described in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. The conservative interpretation of this Scripture passage is understood to mean that there should not be any union between Christians and non-Christians, especially in the form of marriage. It is apparent here how Christian parents expect their Christian adult children to strictly uphold Christian values when it comes to decisions their children make about marriage.

Respondent 5W explained how her Christian mother counselled her, preparing her for marriage since as Christians they believed that marriage is a decision that should not be reversed.

> R5W: *“**She did talk to me and help me understand that this is a decision
> that I'm taking and also that after I make the decision there's no coming
> back** so I had to be sober and we are a prayerful family…I think she
> supported me in that manner to try broaden my perspective of what I'm
> entering into because once it's done it's done. **'Cause we're from a
> Christian background, so once you take the decision to get married you
> have to be sober about it**, at least from my family. **That's what we
> believe**…”* (R5WL86)

This mother's advice is most likely based on the conservative Christian understanding that marriage is a life-long covenant that should not be dissolved as Jesus is quoted saying in Mark 10:9. Unlike the traditional African parents whose expectations and advice concerned traditional customs and values, Christian parents come across as out of touch with the cultural aspects of marriage. This can be understood as a result of the wedge that missionary Christianity drives between faith and culture.

In conclusion, what we find is that the respondents' family background and structure have an influence on how involved their families are in their marriage. Respondents from stable, structured family backgrounds are seen to experience more

involvement in comparison to respondents from unstable family backgrounds. We also find that the principle of seniority in the traditional African family structure subjects respondents to the authority of their parents, prohibiting the respondents from making decisions independently. Also found was that the household's belief system influences the expectations that the household authorities have about their children's choices and decisions concerning marriage. Families who hold traditional African beliefs have expectations that their Christian children do not agree with while Christian families expect their children to uphold their religious values in the decisions they make about marriage.

3.5.1.1.1.2 Role played by families

In this section, I will explore the family's involvement by examining the role played by families during the marriage process and currently in the lives of the respondents.

As the respondents explained their family's involvement, they described the role their families played in their marriage, as well as the role they expect families to play in a marriage. The results revealed that the families played a significant role by facilitating the process of *ilobolo*, planning, and assisting in the wedding and by giving advice. All the respondents explained how their families were responsible to facilitate the process of *ilobolo.* The payment of bride-wealth is what validates a marriage for Africans and without it a marriage is not recognized. Therefore, all respondents experienced it as part of their marriage process. Culture dictates that the negotiations around the payment of the bride-wealth are the sole responsibility of the elders of the families involved, to the exclusion of the couple getting married (Mkhize 2011, Rudwick and Posel 2015:10). This is how Respondent 3W explained it:

> R3W: *"Obviously **when it comes to things like the lobolo, that's more their thing, you're kinda there as a bystander really**. That's the main thing that I can say they facilitated and lead but outside of that, we planned our own wedding." (R3W2)*

This is because of the traditional understanding of *ilobolo* as a process governed by ancestors and it is only elders who can represent the ancestors and not junior family

members (Mkhize 2011). Respondent 4W further explains that culturally, not only are they (as a couple) not allowed to take part in the process, but female family members, including the mother, are also not part of the negotiations. It is the father and other male family members who are responsible to lead the proceedings. This exclusion of women is exclusive to the *Nguni* tribes (this respondent is Xhosa). However, amongst the *Basotho*, the *rakgadi* (the sister of the bride's father) forms part of the negotiators during the *mahadi* (bride-wealth) negotiations (cf. Semenya 2014:3). The exclusion of women in the negation proceedings amongst the *Nguni* points to not only how seniority plays a part in African marriage, but how gender also plays a role.

> R4W: *"**According to our culture we're not part of the negotiation process** and unfortunately **our mother is also not part of the process** and unfortunately **my father is no more**. **So, it was the extended family that was part of it, the males from our family**. So they negotiated according to the way that they thought is the best, in line with the culture, the way that is going to satisfy my dad who's now no more."* (R4W9)

Through this, we see how the family's role in the marriage process is obligated according to cultural demands. Culture demands the participation of families in the establishment of a marriage through the payment of the bride-wealth. Families are also key role players throughout the lifespan of the marriage since African parents have a parental commitment and responsibility towards their children's marriage (cf. Baloyi 2014:28). This is based on the understanding that marriage is for the preservation of the family and clan and because of this, African families have a responsibility to participate in the establishment and success of all the marriages within their clan.

Except for two respondents who planned their own weddings, families generally played a role in the planning of the wedding. Respondents received a lot of assistance with the wedding planning, including financial assistance. In the quotes below, respondents describe their parents' role in planning their weddings.

> R2W: *"The advantages were that, uhm, **financially and when it comes to the stress of planning the whole thing. They were helpful in that. They***

took so many responsibilities from us as parents and did them themselves. For me that was an advantage that they were involved in terms of the planning and everything else." (R2WL13)

R1H: "*In the planning of the wedding ceremony, they were very involved. To the point that they had more people than myself (laughs). My mother said she would give allowance to invite five people to my own wedding (laughs) because that's the only space. So, they were very involved, and they carried the costs also. My parents did everything. I only bought my clothes, they did everything." (R1HL73)*

The assistance from family in planning the wedding is seen to have provided a sense of relief for the respondents who were relieved from certain responsibilities through their family's involvement. This assistance most likely flows from the African understanding that people are interdependent, and that marriage is a family affair. This kind of assistance also displays the values of communalism where it is common practice for resources to be pooled in order to assist others because individuals have a social commitment to share what they have with others (cf. Van der Walt 1988:9).

When it comes to the families' role in the marriage itself, many respondents expressed that they experienced and expected their families to provide assistance, support, and advice. In the statement below, Respondent 1W details the advantage of the advisory role their parents play.

R1W: "*In terms of advantages, I mean now, it's sort of an advisory role that they play, which is very good. Because when you're one person, you don't know everything, and it's the same in marriage – we don't know everything. So, every time when we get stuck, it's nice to be able to go to them and ask for their advice." (R1WL52)*

Respondents revealed an awareness of their limitations. Not knowing everything there was to know about marriage, they needed guidance through advice from their parents. This was found to be especially the case with respondents whose parents were themselves married and were viewed as having more experience.

> R2W: *"I think the advantage is us **learning from their experiences**, especially from my parents because they lived apart for a very long time even my husband's parents have lived apart for a very long time. So, **they're actually warning us about something that they've experienced and it's something that might have impacted their marriages negatively hence they advise against it** that we be apart for such a long time. So, I think the advantage is **to actually get advice from people who've been through it…**"* (R2WL92)

The family was also seen to have a role to play in a marriage because of the nature of a parental relationship. Because a parental relationship is timeless, parents will always have a role to play in their children's lives, married or unmarried. This understanding also reflects the values of communalism which uphold that an individual is never an isolated, independent entity but is from and will always be part of a community (cf. Venter 2004:151). The quotation below demonstrates this.

> R5W: *"It is to protect, and I would also say yeah basically it is that, to **guide to love, to protect and to be there for you as well because you don't stop being your parent's kid just because you married**. Like **I still need my mom**, you know, I may not need her for things I needed her for when I was a teenager, but **when something happens the first person that I want to call is my mom…"*** (R5WL462)

So, families, parents in particular, are considered to have a role to play in the respondents' marriage. This reflects that the respondents do not envision themselves as completely independent from and no longer in need of their families after marriage. This is in contrast with the independence advocated by the Christian and modern family models. Through this we see that respondents are also in favour of some traits of traditional models of family life.

In summary, we see how families are involved in the respondents' marriages because they are considered to have a role to play since marriage is a family affair amongst Africans. A part of the families' role is dictated by culture such as the responsibility to facilitate the marriage process through negotiating the payment of

the bride-wealth (which culture places strictly on the families). Families, particularly parents, had a role to play during the planning of the wedding, including funding it. In the marriage itself, families, particularly parents, are considered to have an advisory role to play since they have experience. The nature of a parental relationship means that respondents will always need their families, conforming to the African perception that an individual is never an isolated entity but is born into and will always be part of a community.

3.5.1.1.1.3 Families assuming control

In this section, I will look into how, in their involvement, families had the tendency of assuming control during the marriage process and how some families still seek to assume control in the lives of the respondents.

We have already discussed the various ways in which families were involved in the respondents' marriages. As respondents explained their family's involvement, they went on to describe how, during the marriage processes, their personal desires were not considered and how they did not get the kind of wedding they desired due to how their families controlled decision-making. This assumption of control is most likely a result of the authority elders possess on the basis of their seniority in the African family structure.

While describing her family's role during the *ilobolo* negotiations, Respondent 4W expressed her grievance over her feelings not being considered. This is most likely because this cultural practice does not require the couple's involvement and is a matter strictly handled by the family according to the prescriptions of culture.

> R4W: *"So **they negotiated according to the way that they thought is the best, in line with the culture**, the way that is going to satisfy my dad who's now no more. **They don't care about how you feel that much, it's about them**, doing what they think is right, and making sure **everything must be satisfying as much as possible on their side otherwise this marriage will not continue.**" (R4WL12).*

It is evident that in the traditional setting, culture is prioritized over the personal desires of an individual (cf. Welch 1933:22). This is one of the disadvantages of

communalism – the over-appreciation of the community which results in the under-appreciation of the individual (cf. Van der Walt 1988:11). Respondent 1H was grieved by not having any input in his wedding because his family took over the wedding planning process.

> R1H: *"…the church took away stuff which I think should have been done by myself and when they came in they also took stuff so the wedding was like…**it didn't matter what I wanted…**So at the end of the day they did it like any other parental thing like putting me in school but this was supposed to be different, **I feel I should have had input...**When I involved them they did good but **I do wish that they sat me down and asked me 'what do you wish? What do you want us to do?' and not just assume that this is how things are done** and just do it the way they think."* (R1HL93)

It is apparent that parental authority is used to make decisions without considering the respondent's preferences. The respondents' grievance reveals the respondents' desire and preference for a more individualistic system which prioritizes personal choice rather than a collective system which prioritizes the demands of the collective over the desires of the individual. A number of respondents complained about not getting the kind of wedding ceremony they wanted as a result of their families assuming control over the decisions about the wedding.

> R2W: *"But **I didn't know that they'd be too involved to such a point that for certain things they decided for me** on my behalf, **one of which was the celebration that we had. I wanted something small with less people and I wanted to spend as little as possible, but that was not possible because that's not the idea that they had** in mind. **They wanted a big celebration**, they wanted to show off and everything. They wanted to go all out. And that for me made me feel like **they were too involved, more than I expected that they'd be involved**."* (R2WL6).

Respondents appear to not be inclined to the traditional understanding that marriage is a community affair. Respondents are not concerned with upholding African cultural values like community involvement which is the idea behind black weddings accommodating so many people. Respondents are more concerned with making financially sound decisions. Again, we see how individualistic practices are

preferred over collective ones. Since the motive behind the respondents' preferred wedding ceremony was saving financially, it becomes easy to understand how the families' financial contributions can be used as a means of controlling decisions around the wedding as Respondent 6H explains.

> R6H: *"I think the disadvantage was that some of them **during the whole process they forget that this is my wedding. Some of them just want to take over, they want things to be done their way**. **Them contributing money led to them wanting to control** – okay, even if they don't say it but there's that thing that 'we contributed money, so we want things to be done our way.' They wanted to sort of take over."* (R6HL51).

We see that it is not only the authority elders possess on the basis of their seniority that allows them to assume control, but it is also their financial power that allows them to make decisions about the wedding ceremony.

In terms of families assuming control in the respondents' day-to-day lives, all the respondents appear to generally live their lives free from the control of their families, but some did mention instances where their families did attempt to control their lives. The following statements reveal the families attempt to control the lives of respondents.

> R1W: *"The disadvantage is that **parents overreach** and so you have to sort of smack their hand so that they can take it away. Because **I think parents – if you let them – they still want to run your lives like you are still under them**, which is a disadvantage..."* (R1WL56)

This excessive involvement in terms of the control parents desire to have in the lives of the respondents can be understood as a result of the parental commitment and responsibility that African parents have towards their children's marriage (cf. Baloyi 2014:28). African families feel such a great responsibility towards the marriage unions of the clan that they always mediate where a marriage experiences disputes and no marriage can be dissolved without the families' intervention and consent (cf. Smith 2001:40). Again, this is because the African understands marriage as a

community affair. It was also evident that such controlling tendencies can also be a result of the parent's personality and not a cultural issue per say. Such can be assumed in the case of Respondent 6W in what she shares below.

> R6W: "***The first time she came here she literally rearranged my sofas**, I was like 'mom you can't do that, this is not your house…you can't come in here and change my sofas, I like them I like my black curtains, you can't change them. **No, you can't go into my room and rearrange the bedspread'.**" (R6WL300)*

The mother appears to have a domineering personality. So, cultural influences are not the only rationale that can result in families attempting to assume control in the lives of the respondents.

In conclusion, we see one of the disadvantages of the families' involvement as the assumption of control. During the marriage process, families used their parental authority and financial powers to make decisions without considering the respondents' preferences. Families also attempt to have control in the day-to-day lives of the respondents as a result of the commitment and responsibility families feel towards the marriage.

3.5.1.1.1.4 Respondents' independence from families

In this section, I will explore the way in which respondents displayed independence from their families which became evident in how respondents were at times not influenced by their family's involvement.

When the respondents were asked about their family's influence on their decision to marry, the results revealed that all the respondents made an independent decision to marry and in the choice of their marriage partner. Marriage is no longer initiated by parents as was done in traditional African society, but young Africans initiate marriage themselves. This shows that respondents do not consider marriage to be a social duty, but a fulfilment of personal desires. Families responded with

concern when the respondents notified them about their decision to marry. In some cases, the concern was over the person chosen for marriage but generally, the concern was over the respondent's readiness. For male respondents, it was concern over financial readiness, while for female respondents, particularly respondents below thirty, it was a concern over their readiness for marriage.

Families were concerned about the choice in marriage partner because they did not really know the person their child had chosen for marriage. This was especially true for families who were not Christians or who did not attend the same church as their children who in most cases chose partners from their church.

> R2W: *"A person who was a bit **sceptical** about the whole thing, mainly because **he didn't know my husband that much** – my dad was the person who was asking me **'what kind of person is he?' 'Are you sure about it?'…"** (R2WL42)*

Another contributing factor to parents not knowing the respondents' partner of choice is the lack of openness about conversations related to romantic relationships in the African Christian household. In other cases, church procedures which prohibit dating are the result of parents not knowing their children's partner. Only two respondents had spoken of or introduced their partner to their families before marriage was proposed.

> R5H: *"So our family we're a Christian family so...within a Christian family we're not as open...I'm not sure if to say Christian or cultural…but there are certain families in a space where **there's no room for being open about relationships, to say that you're dating someone and stuff, you come up when you're saying you're getting married especially when it's within the confines of church."** (R5HL212)*

The concern over financial readiness for males is most likely due to the financial obligations that the male must carry in the marriage process, particularly the payment of the bride-wealth. This concern presumes that the amounts asked for bride-wealth are relatively high, a reflection of how bride-wealth has been commercialized in modern African society.

R5H: *"So obviously my father was a bit more realistic. '**Are you ready for it?' More finance more than anything**. That was his response."* (R5HL165)

Parents seemed more concerned when their young (generally below thirty years old) daughters informed them about their decision to marry. This concern was over the respondent's readiness for marriage, a fear most likely based on how difficult marriage can be for African women who are traditionally expected to persevere through all kinds of mistreatment from their husbands and in-laws.

R5W: *"**No, actually I think more than anything my parents didn't want me to get married then** (laughs) Obviously they wouldn't say 'don't get married'. '**Cause I got married at 21**, I was 21, so **I was such a baby so they were scared that can I handle it**?"* (R5WL67)

I noticed a different trend amongst respondents who were over the age of thirty when they married. Instead of being discouraged by their families from marrying, these respondents experienced pressure and expectation from their families to marry.

R6H: *"On my side **there were comments about my age** but what helped me on my side, was having a good relationship with God…**There were voices, even from neighbours and at home**. 'Get married, you're a good boy, we've never seen a girl here.' **So, there were those voices but I didn't get married because of that pressure**, I got married because of God's timing."* (R6HL72)

It is evident that even though respondents were aware of their families' concerns and preferences, respondents did not allow them to influence their decision-making. This level of independence points to how respondents have adopted individualism in the place of collectivism which would have seen them go against their personal choices in order to adhere to their families' concerns and preferences. Families also appear to be lenient and understanding, allowing the respondents to make their own decisions. One respondent, however, had her marriage choice openly opposed by her father.

> R1W: *"So when I said I wanted to get married to my husband, **my dad's first reaction was that no, he didn't approve."** (R1WL35)*

Although it has become common practice for young Africans to initiate marriage and choose their marriage partner, the choice must still be endorsed by the parents (cf. Musharamina 1981:14, Ekane 2013:3). But even when the choice is not endorsed, young Africans are persisting in their choices, making it a futile exercise for parents to refuse their choices (cf. Onwurah 1982:53).

> R1W: *"I don't think we got past it but **I married him anyway** (laughs). **When I insisted that this is the person I want to marry**, he finally said 'well if that's what you want, then it's fine, but if it were up to me, I wouldn't say you should marry him.'" (R1WL37)*

Parental consent seems to be losing its importance and parental authority is seemingly diminishing. This is the evident impact of individualism in eroding the traditional African values system.

Respondents also indicated that they continue to make independent decisions in their marriage. The ability to make decisions independently appears to hinge on how involved the families are in the marriage. The less families are involved in the marriage, the freer respondents are to make decisions independently.

> R5W: *"**The advantages of them not being involved, I think it gives us the the freedom to become and make our marriage what we want it to be** without trying to impersonate…So that's the advantage, it's given us **the freedom to become and shape our marriage the way that we think is best for us** and our family, which is my husband and I." (R5WL120)*

In some cases, this kind of independence from the family is a result of Christian teaching. The statement below exemplifies how families, from a Christian perspective, were discouraged from being excessively involved in the respondents' lives as it would prohibit their independence. To the traditional African, this may come across as a restriction from using one's parental authority, but we see that the

families did not object to this stance. Parents come across as tolerant and receptive of family systems different to the traditional African system.

> R3W: *"Even after we got married, and I think it was very clear even from our wedding ceremony because **the pastor was very clear that 'you need to allow the kids to build their own family** as the people who are here at the wedding you are here to support them. **You're here to encourage them. But you're not here to dictate to them…you need to allow them to make their own mistakes. You need to allow them to come to you to ask for help but you shouldn't be like imposing yourself on them'.** And I think our families really understood it. When I say family, I mean our parents really understand."* (R3WL112)

In other cases, the independence was rooted in a respondent's upbringing. Respondent 6H grew up making decisions independently since he was not raised in a well-structured household and for that reason, is a very independent individual.

> R6H: *"Me on the other hand, **I grew up having to make my own decisions**…at home they would usually come to me and ask how things should be done…for me it's just to inform them on what I'm planning to do and if they have input they advise me but in most cases **I make decisions and inform them** and they advise me where they want to advise me."* (R6HL112)

In summary, it appears that most couples live their lives independently from the influence of their families. They made the decision to marry independently, although their families sought to influence this decision one way or another. They continue to make decisions independently in their marriage as a result of them having limited involvement from their families. Respondents display a preference for an individualistic lifestyle. Families are also seen to be tolerant of individualistic values instead of enforcing traditional values.

3.5.1.1.1.5 Interaction between respondents and families

In this section, I will reflect on the kind of interaction respondents experienced and continue to experience with their families while their families are involved in the marriage.

As the respondents responded to the question of how involved their families were, the respondents described the kind of interaction they had with their families. We have already seen how families engaged and at times challenged the respondents about decisions they made - this often resulted in disagreement. Male respondents also described the interaction they had with their in-laws as being strained.

A number of participants cited experiencing disagreements with their families. There were often disagreements over how things needed to be done during the marriage process.

> R3W: "*We didn't do a traditional wedding because we had glitches where* ***there was a bit of disagreement where we couldn't get to a conclusion with the families because we wanted to have one day, do everything and finish but they were like 'oh culturally you have to have 'umembeso' and you have to do it this way'.*** *" (R3WL9)*

Respondents often preferred things to be done differently than what culture prescribed. We see through this how respondents' freedom to do things the way they envisioned was curtailed by the demands of culture. The fact that respondents had to be on the compromising end shows just how rigid the collective kinship system can be (cf. Smith 2001:132). At times, it was the respondents' faith that is at the root of them desiring to deviate from culture as seen in the following statement.

> R6W: "*I remember the aunts,* ***they were very unhappy, at some stage they threatened not to come to the wedding***. *'This wedding is doomed; how can you not acknowledge the ancestors?* ***We need to introduce the bride…'*** *but my husband said* ***that's not going to happen***." *(R6WL365)*

Other disagreements respondents had with their families revolved around the money involved in the marriage process. Female respondents, whose families were

on the receiving end of the bride-wealth payment, had their own demands about how the money should be charged and spent. This is a deviation from culture which excludes the bride in matters related to the payment since the issue is handled strictly by male senior members of the family.

> R5W: *"I remember **I even had a fall out with my grandmother because she just wanted everything for herself**, especially when people see cash they've never seen before. So, **we had a fall out for about 2 years. I only started talking to her recently because I was so mad**, you know... So that was a bit of a disadvantage - them wanting things for themselves. And also, like **when people see money they change**, you know. So, **we had to have a lot of meetings about the money**. Money that wasn't even ours as well 'cause **we decided that yes we're going to do lobolo the right way, but all that money is going towards our wedding so that we could have the wedding that we want**." (R5WL34)*

We see how in some instances; respondents were not willing to be on the compromising end and insisted on their ideas being embraced, even when they went against the cultural expectations. This displays how respondents chose the independence that comes with individualism instead of the interdependence that is associated with collectivism. Even though respondents participated in the cultural obligations of the collective, they did so on their own terms.

As respondents continued to explain their families' involvement, some described their interaction with their in-laws. In contrast to the strained relationship common between young brides and their mother-in-law whom they are meant to live under the supervision of after marriage (cf. de Haas 1984:204), respondent 3W described her relationship with her mother-in-law as one characterized by freedom. This is attributed to her mother-in-law's care-free personality. Through this we find how the relationship between respondents and their in-laws is not only determined by cultural guidelines, but it is also influenced by the personalities of the individuals in the relationship.

R3W: *"But **there's not a lot of pressure to say, uh you know, 'makoti (daughter in law) do this'**. **My mother in-law is very much like, 'do you' you know. We talk, we have a good relationship** even from both sides…"* (R3WL122).

Male respondents, however, described strained relationships with their in-laws. The respondents generally felt uncomfortable with having to be frequently around their in-laws. Both respondents who expressed feeling this way were married to spouses who came from well-structured families, while they came from less structured families. It appears that individuals who did not have a stable upbringing characterized by fellowship and togetherness find it strenuous to have to participate in frequent family get-togethers.

R6H: *"Okay, **with her family**, there were times – I thought I was the only one with the problem, **there were times where it seems we're going to her home too frequently**. So sometimes I'd feel like a 'sbari-makoti' (a son-in-law who acts like a daughter in law) (laughs)…So I'd ask my mentors, 'guys, this is how I feel, this is what happens, **we spend most of our time at our in-laws, Sundays we are there, during the week, we are there**.'"* (R6HL137)

In summary, the interaction between participants and their families is characterized by disagreements which arose when respondents could not see eye-to-eye with their families concerning the way things needed to be done during the marriage process. It is not many times that the respondents are willing to compromise their ideals. Respondents are seen to be living according to the principle of independence prevalent in the nuclear family system characterized by individualism instead of the principle of interdependence advocated by the traditional African family system. The kind of interaction between respondents and their in-laws is seen to be influenced by the personality of the senior in the relationship as well as the social background of the respondents.

3.5.1.1.2 Theme 2: Cultural Practices

Some of the respondents' views and experiences of communalism are tied to their experiences of cultural practices which they are obligated to participate in during the marriage process. It is the respondents' social duty to participate in these cultural practices since they are part of their respective tribal communities. Therefore, in order to gain more understanding about the couple's views and experiences of communalism, respondents were asked about the cultural practices they had to perform as part of their marriage process. The interviews proceeded with respondents identifying and describing the cultural rituals they underwent as well as explaining their views on these rituals. Through the constant comparison of the codes identified from the data, codes were merged together based on similarity. Analysis of these codes revealed three significant sub-themes related to the theme of cultural practices. These sub-themes held constant across all respondents, namely:

- The respondent's understanding of the payment of *ilobolo*
- The respondent's views on the payment of *ilobolo*
- The respondent's understanding and views on other cultural practices

Each of these sub-themes is analysed in detail below.

3.5.1.1.2.1 Respondents' understanding of *ilobolo*

When respondents were asked about the cultural practices they had to perform as part of their marriage process, all respondents indicated that they had underwent the process of the payment of *ilobolo.* This was expected since the payment of the bride-wealth is what validates a marriage for Africans and is a very common practice practised all over Africa in varying degrees (cf. Mbiti 1969:140). Respondents were then asked about their understanding of *ilobolo.* Respondents had a common understanding that *ilobolo* was meant to establish a relationship between the families by formally introducing the families to one another. It was also understood as a means of showing respect to the woman's family by asking for permission to marry their daughter. Respondents also explained that the payment of *ilobolo* was a means of showing gratitude to the bride's family.

R3W: *"My understanding is it's about **bringing two families together**. So in that the **cows will represent a gift which is a token of saying thank you to the bride-to-be's family for raising her and providing them with a wife.** That's basically what they represent…you're **building a relationship between the two families**, that's what I really understand it to be."* (R3WL279)

The respondents' understanding of *ilobolo* corresponds with the literature explored in this study. This illustrates how the respondents have a clear and accurate understanding of the cultural practices they participate in. This points to how common knowledge about *ilobolo* is and is significant because these respondents live in urban areas as opposed to rural areas where tradition is well-preserved. Urbanization has negatively affected African culture in that it has resulted in the erosion of traditional value systems (cf. Hope 1998:354), causing young African couples in urban areas to lean towards more Western attitudes and values rather than African ones. However, this finding demonstrates how certain elements of African culture have been preserved even in urbanized areas.

There was only one respondent who indicated having no understanding of *ilobolo,* but he still underwent it out of obligation.

R2H: *"**I was just following what I was told**, otherwise I wouldn't have... Honestly. They only tell us that **it's something that is mandatory to be done before marriage, but I don't even understand why we have to do it and what it is**."* (R2HL194)

It is evident how binding culture is. Cultural practices are compulsory and are done out of social duty regardless of the individuals views or understanding (or lack thereof). It is also worth noting that none of the respondents spoke of the religious function of *ilobolo*. In its religious function, *ilobolo* is meant to honour the ancestors of the families coming together through marriage, therefore attracting the ancestor's blessing on the marriage (cf. Mkhize 2011, Posel and Rudwick 2014:63). The respondents not acknowledging the religious aspect of *ilobolo* could be a result of their conservative Christian belief which forbids interaction with the dead.

Respondents also emphasised that the practice of *ilobolo* was more a matter of relationship than it was a monetary matter.

> R5H: *"**There's a gift which is obviously money** that is left with the other family. But I'd view it as, **I'd explain it beyond the money not to highlight the money part** or…I'd say **it's more an exchange and introduction of families where they come together**." (R5HL329)*

It can be assumed that this emphasis is necessary because of the way bride-wealth has been commercialized in modern African society as a result of the loss of its correct understanding.

In summary, because marriage in Africa is established through the payment of the bride-wealth, all participants partook in the cultural practice of *ilobolo*. The practice is understood to be mandatory as a social duty. The respondents had a common and accurate understanding of *ilobolo*, pointing to how well-preserved the practice is even in the urban context. The respondents' emphasised the correct understanding of the practice of *ilobolo* due to the awareness of how, with modernization, the practice has been commercialized.

3.5.1.1.2.2 Respondents' views on ilobolo

Respondents were then asked about their views on *ilobolo*. A number of respondents valued *ilobolo* and anticipated its continuation while a few respondents felt it was no longer relevant and in need of further development. Respondents acknowledged that *ilobolo* was being exploited by being handled as a transaction.

Respondents who valued *ilobolo* and were in support of its continuation were not oblivious to its negative connotations. Respondents were aware of the negative consequences of *ilobolo*, particularly it being commercialized as a result of selfish motives. The significance of this is that respondents consider the practice of *ilobolo* important regardless of the negative factors that are now associated with it.

R5W: "*So I think **I am a thousand percent for 'lobolo'. I think it's important**, just that **I think some people can be greedy and selfish**. Like why would you charge R50 000 for this, you know, but that's when **we strip the value of what it means and try to make it serve us** the way that we want it to. **But lobolo as a system, or as an event or whatever, I think it's important...**" (R5WL381)*

For some respondents, it took undergoing the custom themselves to see the value of *ilobolo*. It appears that to the unmarried, *ilobolo* is viewed as a hinderance from getting married (most likely because of the high amounts of money that is required). The commercialization of *ilobolo* is therefore seen to present a challenge to young Africans, making it difficult for them to marry.

R5H: "*I think me with 'iloblolo' – okay and **I also think it depends where you are. When you still want to get married, you don't want 'lobolo' because you feel like this thing is holding me back**, I wanna marry this person…why do they want my money? **But after I got through it, this is my view**, I'm glad you mentioned it, **it gives you a different perspective of the person that you're marrying**…So, **I'm all for what it teaches and what it facilitates more than the money part. The whole journey I think is a beautiful one that is necessary** within the marriage journey…*" (R5HL337)

Respondents who advocated for the continuation of *ilobolo* also did so out of a desire to preserve this cultural practice.

R6H: "*I think another thing, **'ilobolo' is ours as Africans and we need to take pride in it...I think we should continue with 'ilobolo' and take pride in it**.*" (R6HL432)

This could possibly be a result of the political worldview of Black Consciousness which developed a new attitude that blacks have towards their traditional customs (cf. de Haas 1984:310). Black South Africans were encouraged through the movement to challenge white Western models of living by preserving their own culture.

Other respondents however felt that *ilobolo* was an old-fashioned practice that had no prospects of continuation as it was irrelevant to the current context.

> R4W: *"My view on the 'lobolo' thing is that **it is outdated**, I don't think it is something I would do with my children when they are getting married. Because **the situations are not the same, the ones that were happening long time ago and the way that things are happening now with our generation**." (R4WL218)*

This view of traditional customs as outdated and old-fashioned has been noted to be a result of education, trade and travel which broadens the horizon for individuals (cf. Onwurah 1982:50). It is important to remember that all respondents underwent the custom of the payment of *ilobolo*. This means that even though respondents went ahead and participated in the custom, they did not really approve of the practice. This again points to how binding cultural practices are and how they are done out of social duty regardless of the individual's views.

However, other respondents who concurred that *ilobolo* was irrelevant also felt that there was a need to develop it in order for to fit into the current context.

> R1W: *"**I think in the Christian context the way it is being done now, it is completely irrelevant to the culture we live in now**. There's an element of it being exploited. I think **it would have been relevant if the concept of 'ilobolo' was further developed to fit into the culture we now live in**. When you look at the reasons why it came into existence, back then, it made sense to pay it. Because the major issue was for it to help the couple to start of their new home. **But in our context, it's irrelevant, unless it can be further developed**." (R1WL159)*

This wish respondents have for ways to be found to make *ilobolo* relevant to today's context displays how respondents are not simply dismissive of their culture but desire its preservation and effective continuation.

In their views, respondents displayed awareness of the negative impact of ilobolo when it is exploited. The commercialization of *ilobolo* makes getting married very

expensive, and therefore delays marriage for young Africans and promotes cohabitation in its place.

> R6W: *"So a part of me feels like **it's very one-dimensional and a bit exploitative** and **I'm not sure if it's a cultural aspect that is currently functioning to serve young black Africans**. It's very expensive to get married. That's why you find we cohabitate a lot..."* (R6WL385)

The exploitation of *ilobolo* through excessive charging was also said to promote married women forcefully staying in abusive marriages.

> R4H: *"When we grew up I think there was a belief that if you have more daughters you are rich (both laugh) because you'll be getting cows for 'lobolo'. That for me, I think it was a wrong belief or practice because **if you get these ten or twelve cows, even if your daughter is not being treated well there you still send your daughter back because I think you've got this guilty conscious to say 'how can you come back when you know my kraal is full of cows from that family.'** So, **you end up not accommodating your kids, whatever happens, whatever treatment that she gets there, you push her back.**"* (R4HL242)

This view is based on how excessive charging for *ilobolo* promotes the common misconception that the payment of *ilobolo* amounts to purchasing the woman – this type of ownership often results in the ill-treatment of the woman (cf. Knoetze 2000:533).

In summary, though all respondents underwent *ilobolo*, not all agreed on its relevancy and importance. This displays the place of socio-cultural sanctions as above the individual's views and feelings. The commercialization of *ilobolo* is seen to hinder marriage for young Africans by delaying marriage, promoting cohabitation and gender-based violence in marriage. All these negatives are however not weighty enough to cause respondents to completely dismiss this cultural practice as they wish that the practice be developed in order to be relevant to the current context and therefore preserved for coming generations.

3.5.1.1.2.3 Other practices

When asked about the cultural practices they performed as part of their marriage process, all but one couple indicated that *ilobolo* was the only cultural practice they underwent. These respondents, however, did indicate that their families did require them to undergo other customs. Only one of these couples agreed to do the required custom after the wedding but has still not done it. This delay (of five years) reflects how the respondents do not prioritize some cultural practices.

> R3W: *"We haven't…**we've really focused on building our own lives after the wedding**. And, um, there hasn't been the right time to do it really, so yeah, we still, we don't know when it's gonna happen… We're at a point where they understand that we will do it, we haven't forgotten about it. **Our marriage doesn't necessarily hinge on whether we've done this ceremony or not. It will come when the time allows."** (R3WL17)*

Evidently, respondents prioritize their own goals over the requirements of culture. This individualistic behaviour does not conform with the values of traditional African society.

> R5W: *"That's all we did as far as culture is concerned. **We didn't do your membeso, your memulo, we didn't do any of those things…we're not into those things, no. And we didn't see a need, especially we thought of it financially more than anything.** So we did nothing except for lobolo."* (R5WL284)

Some respondents who were pressurized by their families to do other customs refused to do these customs because of their Christian faith. The customs included the honouring of the dead which goes against born-again Christian beliefs.

> R6W: *"No but **there was pressure, you remember the relatives who wanted us to do 'umembeso'?** 'Umembeso' - the exchange of gifts, but **we had an issue with that because they wanted to gift people who had already passed away**…So that **may have caused some friction so we decided not to do it**." (R6WL358)*

It appears that respondents prioritize Christian guidelines over the expectations and instructions of their families, even though the respondents were aware that the Bible requires them to obey their parents (cf. Exodus 20:12). This points to how African Christians who have traditional African families are faced with the complex balancing act of honouring both their parents and honouring God.

> R3W: *"I think that **we made sure that we've done everything to honour them as parents. And to honour God as well.**" (R3WL25)*

Through this we see how the authority that seniors hold in the traditional African family setting is not only diminished as a result of the respondents' Millennial tendencies, but it is also undermined by Christian teaching.

The only couple that partook in other traditional customs had strong ties to a rural area. They are also the only couple who have not yet concluded the *ilobolo* payment due to a system that demands multiple and unpredictable payments.

> R4W: *"Then they came back, **paying, paying, paying until they reached half** of the amount. **I don't even know how much was charged** because based on that you can't really tell…They said 'we are not going to say anything until you reach half, **if you don't reach half, there is no handing over**. **We'll tell you when you've reached half, you'll just keep coming back until you hear from us that you are now at half the price.'"** (R4WL37)*

It appears that the marriage process is lengthier and involves more cultural practices in the rural areas as the couple not only had to participate in other ceremonies but still has another outstanding ceremony which needs to be done after the final payment of *ilobolo*. This demonstrates how culture and its practices are well preserved in rural areas.

> R4H: *"It's a sort of a welcoming…**it's a ceremony that we do from the husband's side to welcome the wife. We slaughter a sheep and give a**

name to the wife as well. In the process the elders will also teach the wife how things are done." (R4HL190)

R4W: "***There's another ceremony that's done, but we haven't done it. It's done after the lobolo has been fully paid.*** *That one is when the wife's family buys stuff, usually it's clothes, blankets, furniture, and takes it to the husband's home where they are given a list of people from the husband's side - the family members, elders according to their houses…This ceremony is called 'ibhakede'."* (R4WL193)

It is evident that respondents with strong ties to rural areas are more likely to undergo more ceremonies. They might not be in agreement with all these customs, evident in the statement below, but they are still obligated to undergo them. It would seem parental authority has not lost its strength in rural areas which implies that the impact of communalism on marriages is possibly greater in rural areas than in urban areas.

R4W: "***My mother said they will have to do 'ukuyalwa' where they will tell you how do you behave in marriage…and I said 'I don't think this thing is relevant*** *because you are telling me how to behave but you will not be telling the husband how to behave…****but it's fine, that process can go on, you can do it'.***" (R4WL65)

In summary, other cultural customs appear to have not been prioritized except by respondents with strong ties to a rural area. Individualistic behaviour was not the only factor discoursing the practice of other cultural practices, but Christian teaching which prohibits communication with the dead also has respondents refusing to undergo other cultural practices. Parental authority and group culture appears to be stronger in rural areas, making the marriages of those couples with ties to rural areas prone to be more impacted by the communal values of African society.

3.5.1.1.3 Theme 3: Communal society

It has already been established that the marriage of Africans is distinct to the African communal way of life. Therefore, to further understand the couple's views and experiences of communalism, the interviews proceeded by asking the respondents about their understanding of *ubuntu* and also what they thought *ubuntu* means for marriage. Through the constant comparison of the codes identified from the data, codes were merged together based on similarity. Analysis of these codes revealed two significant sub-themes related to the theme of communal society. These sub-themes held constant across all respondents, namely:

- The respondent's understanding of *ubuntu*
- The respondent's views on what *ubuntu* meant for marriage

Each of these sub-themes is analysed in detail below.

3.5.1.1.3.1 Respondents' understanding of *ubuntu*

When asked about their understanding of the phrase *'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'*, respondents reflected that it meant community, the need for people, loving and helping one another. Some respondents also expressed their concern about how *ubuntu* was lacking in urban society.

Respondents correctly translated and interpreted the phrase, reflecting how the phrase pointed to the African view that self-definition is rooted in community.

> R6W: *"**I am who I am because of the people around me and their contributions**." (R6WL451)*

> R2W: *"So I **think in a whole person there are certain pieces and traits which are a contribution made by another person** that you've encountered in your life. So, they've made a certain deposit in your life and that's what makes you the person that you are. **Your experiences and encounters with other people make up the person that you are."** R2WL227)*

This correct understanding of what *ubuntu* points to respondents' awareness of the social structure of African community. However, respondents not only understood *ubuntu* as an African issue, but also viewed it as a universal human issue. For many respondents, *ubuntu* expresses how humans are social beings meant to exist in community and not in isolation; therefore, dependent on one another.

> R1W: *"For me, it speaks to **community and people you do life with**.* ***Humans were never created to be alone**."* (R1WL182)

> R2H: *"**No one is born from isolation**. You can't be a secluded tree standing just alone.* ***You need a support, of the community,*** *the support of everybody.* ***That's how we are, human, we are social beings**."* (R2HL221)

Some respondents merged *ubuntu* and teachings of the Bible. This is interesting because so far, we have only seen the differences between African culture and the teachings of Christianity. This finding shows how respondents do not necessarily view African culture and Christianity as polar opposites. This shows that at times, respondents are in favour of a dialogic model of the relationship between African culture and Christianity.

> R3H: "***The real heart of ubuntu should be loving others***, *I can just take from Scripture, the second greatest commandment,* ***love others as you love yourself**."* (R3HL380)

Other African cultural values were also likened to Biblical teachings.

> R5W: "…*even* ***as Christians we are taught honour in the Bible, we are taught respect***. *So,* ***our values are not so, you know, detangled from what the Bible says.**" (R5WL378)

A few respondents commented that *ubuntu* is lacking in the urban society they lived in in comparison to the more traditionally African society they grew up in in the townships. This points to an awareness about the changing patterns in African society as a result of urbanization and modernization.

> R3W: *"I think in the urban context, shu, it's a little bit...at least according to my understanding* ***I don't see that thing much in our urban context***, *in our*

*community. **We all live behind high walls, electric fences, you don't see your neighbours**, that kind of thing. **There isn't much community involvement**." (R3WL363)*

Respondents expressed a discomfort with this foreign concept of individualism.

R6H: *"So now **we've adopted this thing**, which I don't like because it doesn't work for me and **I wasn't raised that way, that each person is in their own cocoon. That has become our life now**, that **each person minds their own business**…it's the first time I see it that you live with neighbours you don't know…" (R6HL466)*

It is noteworthy that none of the respondents were able to recognize their own individualistic behaviour, therefore making their understanding of the collective concept of *ubuntu* seem like only an ideal that they failed to practically uphold in their own lives.

In summary, respondents understand *ubuntu* as a sense of community, based on the social nature of human beings who thrive in relationships rather than isolation. Respondents considered collectivism to be a universal value and not limited to African society. *Ubuntu* was understood to be in agreement with the teachings of the Bible on how to treat others. Respondents identified *ubuntu* as a missing element in their urban society where the individualism of the Western model of society was thriving. This understanding of ubuntu seems idealistic as respondents have previously displayed individualistic behaviour and a preference for more modern and urban patterns of living.

3.5.1.1.3.2 The meaning of *ubuntu* and marriage

When asked about what *ubuntu* means for marriage in particular, respondents explained how a marriage needed other people in order to be successful, and how those relationships with other people held the married couple accountable and aided it when a need arose.

Respondents believed that marriage did not isolate a couple but needed the participation of other people in order to be successful. These people were not limited to the couple's family (whose involvement is considered to be inevitable) but included all other people the couple valued. Marriage, in the collective concept of African culture, is understood to be dependent on other relationship in order to succeed. This is the reasoning behind the traditional patrilocal setting that marriages existed within.

> R2W: *"…**marriage will never survive if you live like it's just you and your partner only**. **They'll always be the involvement of families**. That's something we cannot change whether we like it or not. **Family will somehow be involved, community will somehow be involved, the people we are exposed to at work, wherever we go, they'll be somehow involved and contribute a certain, um, and make a certain contribution to our marriage**." (R2WL296)*

These relationships with others provide the couples with assistance and hold the couple accountable.

> R1H: *"**You can't do marriage without people**. **You need to be accountable to someone**. We can't be accountable to ourselves as a couple but need to be accountable to other people. **You need someone to ask you difficult questions and hold you accountable, to challenge your behaviour**. We've been without that and it's bad. **It's detrimental when you have no one to check up on you as a couple**. It's not just pastors, but you need this from friends." (R1HL190)*

In traditional African society where married life was lived out within a patrilocal setting (where married sons remained with the patriarch), these functions that the respondents describe were fulfilled through the various couples and people that were part of the homestead. We see here how respondents see the need to find ways to fill the gap that urbanization has created in the African family structure.

In summary, respondents recognized how marriage was interdependent upon other relationship in order to be successful. This was recognized and provided for in traditional African society through the patrilocal family structure.

3.5.1.2   Findings from responses to objective two
Research objective two: to establish whether family involvement has a negative or positive effect on the couple's relationship. From the participants sharing their experiences about the effect of family involvement, one pertinent theme arose, that of the effect that family involvement had on the respondents' marital relationship. The following section will unpack this theme, providing evidence with description.

3.5.1.2.1 Theme 4: Effect on marital relationship
In order to determine the effect that family involvement has on the respondents' marital relationship, respondents were asked whether their families' involvement had a positive or negative effect on their marital relationship. Through the constant comparison of the codes identified from the data, codes were merged together based on similarity. Analysis of these codes revealed two significant sub-themes related to the theme of the effect of family involvement on the marital relationship. These sub-themes held constant across all respondents, namely:

- The positive effect of the family's involvement
- The negative effect of the family's involvement

Each of these sub-themes is analysed in detail below.

3.5.1.2.1.1 Positive effect of family involvement

When respondents were asked whether the involvement of their families had a positive or negative effect on their marital relationship, a majority of the respondents indicated that their families' involvement had a positive effect on their marital relationship. The advisory role that their families played and the support from the families made marriage easier for the respondents, making the couples feel cushioned.

> R2W: "*So I feel that their involvement,* **their advice, all the conversations we've had have positively affected our marriage and has just made things easier for us***. Because honestly,* **I am enjoying my marriage a lot, and I see that it's things that they've spoken over me***, things that they've advised us to be careful of…So* **I feel that we're sort of put in a nest** *in these first few months of our marriage.* **We are nested in and protected.**" (R2WL141)

It was worth noticing that some respondents were positively affected by their families' minimal involvement. They felt that the space and freedom they were allowed benefitted their marriage in that they figured things out independently without any external influence.

> R5W: "*So I think* **it has contributed positively** *in that manner in that* **we're learning and we're growing and we're figuring it out together without certain influences that are not supposed to be there***, without them shaping how we look.*" (R5WL141)

> R3W: "*I think* **it has benefitted our marriage** *because* **it would be source of conflict if one of us is constantly saying 'my mom said this so let's do it'***. So, I think that* **the fact that they allow us to kind of develop our own way according to our belief systems helps us***.*" (R3WL146)

It is apparent that respondents desire to be fully independent and to not be influenced. For respondents who did not share the same faith with their families, this was especially the case because the influence that would come from their families would most likely contradict their Christian values. It appears that the individualism of the nuclear family system provides respondents the kind of freedom that benefits their relationship.

In summary, the marriage relationship of respondents benefits from the families' advice and support which make marriage easier for the respondents. The minimal involvement of families is also seen to benefit the marriage relationship as it allows the respondents the freedom to make decisions independently.

3.5.1.2.1.2 Negative effect of family involvement

When respondents were asked whether the involvement of their families had a positive or negative effect on their marital relationship, a few of the respondents indicated that their families' involvement had a negative effect on their marital relationship. The family's excessive involvement in the marriage lead to friction in the respondents' marriage. Respondent 1W's relationship with her husband had at first been negatively affected because their parents were very involved in their marriage.

> R1W: *"In terms of their involvement in our marriage, **we really had to learn because at the beginning our parents were very involved. Through that we had to learn to limit their involvement in our marriage.** So as things stand today, our parents are not involved in our marriage. We filter the information that we give to them…They receive what we give them, **they don't come in and take over. At first we failed at this very much because both our parents were very involved in our relationship.**" (R1WL44)*

When parents are excessively involved by being in control, the respondents' marital relationship suffered. But when respondents limited their involvement and took charge, their relationship improved. Again, it is apparent that the respondents' marital relationship flourishes when the families' involvement is minimal.

Respondents 6 also recounted a difficult period in their marriage which was a result of one parent's demand of frequent visits. For Respondent 6H, the frequent visits to his in-laws were a contravention against his freedom, but his wife saw no problem, and so they contended over the issue.

> R6W: *"I'm just thinking a couple of months ago – **my mom loves family gatherings, she's all about family relationships. So, she wanted us to come over every Sunday for lunch**. And I'm used to it so it's not a thing. Little did I know **that for my husband, that could have been a bit strenuous** cause I mean he works six days and **sometimes he just wants to come home and be a bum. And he did not feel like he was been given the space to do that**…**And that caused friction** because I was like 'but what's the big deal, you can go relax at home…**And my mom was insisting*

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on it 'no guys we have to build a relationship, relationships are very intentional and and and'. And I think for him it could have felt like an imposition...So, in terms of the time that we spent at home and the involvement of the family…I think that did cause a bit of friction, we had to work through things like that."(R6WL341)

R6H: *"So reaching a conclusion where we agree was tough, there were times where we really wrestle (laughs)…she was insisting so I said to her 'if you want to go home, go home, just allow me the space that if I don't want to go, I don't go and I shouldn't feel condemned, when you come back you blackmail me emotionally…as long as you'll be fine with going alone and come back fine. So we agreed." (R6HL160)*

Through this, we find that the demands families make can have a negative effect on the couple's relationship when the couple cannot agree on such demands. The respondents are seen to desire and contend for their freedom and independence.

In conclusion, the respondents' marital relationship suffers when parents are excessively involved by being in control or making demands. When the respondents act independently, instead of being subjected to their parents' authority, the marriage relationship prospers.

3.5.1.3 Findings from responses to objective three

Research objective three: to establish the relationship between the couple's views on communalism and their Christian faith. From the participants sharing their views and experiences of communalism, as well as from them sharing their understanding of Genesis 2:24, one pertinent theme arose, that of the influence of the respondents' Christian faith. The following section will unpack this theme, providing evidence with description.

3.5.1.3.1 Theme 5: Christian faith influence

In order to establish the relationship between the couple's views on communalism and their Christian faith, respondents were asked to explain their understanding of the concept of leaving and cleaving as described in Genesis 2:24. The influence of their Christian faith is also a theme that surfaced numerous times while respondents described their views and experiences of communalism. Respondents either mentioned how their Christian faith influenced their decisions or commented on their church's involvement in the marriage process or marriage itself. Through the constant comparison of the codes identified from the data, codes were merged together based on similarity. Analysis of these codes revealed three significant sub-themes related to the theme of the influence of the respondents' Christian faith. These sub-themes held constant across all respondents, namely:

- The involvement of the church in the marriage process and marriage
- The respondents' understanding of the concept of 'leaving and cleaving'
- The interaction between the respondents' faith and cultural practices

Each of these sub-themes is analysed in detail below.

3.5.1.3.1.1 Church involvement

As respondents described their experiences during the marriage process, some respondents mentioned how their churches were involved. They described the limits that their church imposed and the role of the teachings they received from their church. The church also participated in the respondents' marriage by providing community and guidance to the respondents.

Respondents described the limitations imposed by the church procedure. In one case, the church's procedure limited the families' involvement because the process was initiated with the respondents communicating strictly with the church instead of their families. The families were only involved after the respondents had already agreed to the marriage before their pastor.

> R1W: *"I think that's another thing my husband and I talk about because here, as you know* **we got married in our former church and they encourage**

you to keep it quiet and not to talk to people about it, so not a lot of people were involved, actually, even in our families." (R1WL3)

This limited the families in being able to advice the respondents about their choice prior to the respondents agreeing to marry. The church's involvement here took away the family's role of consenting to the marriage choice.

Some church procedures also prohibited the respondents from dating.

R1W: *"…what I decided for myself was **that I didn't want to marry someone that I didn't know**. That was my first thing, and my second thing was that **I didn't want to marry someone that didn't know my family well**. So, **in spite of the fact that at church we were not allowed to date,** my husband and I decided that because this is how I feel and he felt a similar way, **we decided that we were going to date**." (R1WL21)*

This going against church procedure shows the respondents' ability to make decisions independently, pursuing their preferences even when they are against their church's teaching. It appears that respondents chose individualistic norms over both their African culture and Christian values.

Respondents also mentioned the involvement of the church through teachings they received. These were teachings they received during marriage counselling while others were teaching respondents grew up hearing in the church which have influenced their understanding of marriage. Through this we see the extent of the influence the church has on the marriage of respondents in that it shares the same advisory role that the families play.

R3W: *"They're as involved as we want them to be. I think **we learnt a lot when we did our marriage counselling in terms of, you know they teach you a lot about cleaving and leaving** and how do you build." (R3WL95)*

R5W: *"And I think the person that I am today and **most of the values that I hold dear to are values that I learned then through that system, you know, of church of having services catered to us** as children. So I think*

it contributes a lot to who we become when we are married…The way I respect and honour my husband, probably is something I learned at church that this is how you honour 'cause we can't figure everything out on our own." (R5WL444)

The involvement of the church was also seen in how respondents sought help from the church when encountering problems. Respondents preferred seeking help from their church community rather than their families and as a result were influenced more by their church community rather than their own families. This is because of the similarity in lifestyle between the respondents and their church communities in comparison to their families who might have a different belief system and therefore different values than them.

R3W: *"Like **if we have problems, we would rather go speak to somebody at church** or somebody that we trust because that's how we want to live our lives...**So, we go where we feel that the help we're going to get fits into our lifestyle**."* (R3WL108)

R5W: *"Well other than that, obviously I should mention that **we have amazing mentors - our spiritual parents who influence… who I'd say that they mostly influence how we do things more than our biological parents.**"* (R5WL148)

In summary, it appears that the place occupied by the church in the marriages of the respondents can replace or interfere with the family's involvement. This is evident in how the church's procedure can limit the families' involvement or in how the church community can play the advisory role ordinarily played by the family. Respondents are still seen to be making independent choices, choosing their preferences even against the teachings of their church.

3.5.1.3.1.2 Leaving and cleaving

When asked about their understanding of the common Christian concept of 'leaving and cleaving' based on Genesis 2:24, respondents explained that it meant independence, the formation of a new family, and a change of priority.

The concept of 'leaving and cleaving' was understood by the respondents to have a practical meaning. For all the respondents, it meant becoming independent from one's family and assuming responsibility for one's life. Separating from family allows the couple to be autonomous, exercising authority over their home instead of still being subject to the authority of the seniors of the household.

> R4W: *"…**it actually means you should take your beds from your home and get your own place to live** (laughs) because you **the husband needs to be the head in his own home and if he is not leaving his home, there he will always be a child, there are heads of that home**. So that's how we understand it and that's how we're applying it… As early as possible, we want to be having our own place in the rural areas that is far from the homes (laughs) so that we can be **fully independent in the mind as well as physically.**" (R4WL353)*

This separation is understood to be important in light of the formation of a new family that needs to take place in marriage. This understanding is strikingly different from the traditional African perspective that marriage was the continuation of the family, hence the patrilocal family structure.

> R3W: *"It really goes back to you **forming a new family**, it will be parts of a little bit of each of you. It will draw on your past experiences as individuals but now you're one person…**You leave the old and cleave to each other**."* (R3WL426)

The respondents also understood the phrase to mean that marriage required a change of priority where the parents were no longer the priority. It meant the man's complete dedication to his wife where he puts her needs and their needs as a couple above all others (cf. Matthews 1996:223).

> R5W: *"I think when the man leaves his mother and father and now cleaving to his wife, I think for me it means more than anything, it's **a shift of prioritized commitment** if I may. So that I don't say you're shifting commitment from your parents now that you're married. Your parents still need you, but now it's just that **it's a matter of the priority of commitment, 'cause now it means that my husband is more committed to me than he is to his parents**." (R5WL538)*

Again, this understanding is different from the traditional African family system which prioritizes the patriarch or matriarch and the family's needs above anyone else, including self (cf. Van der Walt 1998:9).

Respondents were quick to mention what the phrase did not mean. It was emphasized that the concept did not mean abandonment of the family.

> R4W: *"**the Bible doesn't say that you must neglect your family or abandon your family** but it says that you must move from your mother and father and be united to your wife if you are a husband." (R4WL379)*

With all these evident differences between African culture and Christian teaching in view, respondents were then asked whether they thought there was a contradiction between the concept of 'leaving and cleaving' and the concept of *ubuntu*. All the respondents indicated that there was no contradiction even though most of them struggled to adequately justify their stance. This shows how respondents earnestly want to believe that the collectivism of African culture can co-exist with the somewhat individualistic nature of some Christian teachings.

> R6W: *"So no **I don't think there's a contradiction at all**. Even within the context of 'ubuntu' we can still do the leaving and cleaving the way God wants us to do it for our family. '**Ubuntu' does not restrict that at all, in fact 'ubuntu' may enhance it in more ways**." (R6WL563)*

> R1W: *"**I don't think there's a contradiction between the two**, I mean when you understand God's mind about relationships and marriage it becomes obvious." (R1WL213)*

In summary, the concept of 'leaving and cleaving' means independence from, though not abandonment of, the parents and aligns with the neolocal or nuclear family system. The wife being prioritized in the place of the family and its patriarch/matriarch is more characteristic of individualism juxtaposed against collectivism. Despite these differences, respondents chose to believe in a dialogical model of the relationship between African culture and Christianity.

3.5.1.3.1.3 Faith and cultural practices

As respondents responded to questions about cultural practices, the issue of cultural practices in relation to their faith surfaced, particularly with respondents who did not come from a Christian family background. The respondents' Christian faith was the reason behind the respondents not participating in certain cultural practices, particularly those that involved issues of ancestral veneration.

Some respondents requested their families to omit certain parts of cultural practices in order to not go against their Christian beliefs while others modified how they did certain ceremonies in order to not contradict their faith.

> R2W: *"…But obviously **there are certain things about it – but we didn't go through that – certain things that are cultural**. It was mainly **because I spoke to my dad about it, that 'since I'm Christian I prefer that we not do those things** even though you want to do them because that's how you know things are done." (R2WL210).*

All these instances show how careful respondents were to uphold their Christian values during the marriage process. They boldly addressed their families concerning these issues, even though that had the potential of causing conflict because of them going against culture. We see here how respondents prioritize the values of their Christian faith over African culture and its practices

3.6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the impact communalism has on the marriages of modern African Christians through the following research objectives:

> a) to establish the views and experiences of modern African Christian couples concerning communalism in marriage,
>
> b) to determine if family involvement has a negative or positive effect on the couple's relationship,
>
> c) to determine the relationship between the couple's views and experiences of communalism and their Christian faith.

From the data collected as well as from the reflection on the essential themes that have emerged from this study, it became evident that due to the communal African way of life, the families of African Christian couples are very involved in the marriage process and in the marriage itself. Respondents appreciated the support and advice from their families, but they were not comfortable with their families assuming control and exercising authority over them. Young Africans were seen to prefer modern marriage patters characterized by a nuclear family structure rather than traditional African marriage patterns characterised by collectivism and interdependence. There was an obvious deviation from the communal African way of life and the embracing of the individualistic, modern ways of life.

Various quotes from the respondents pointed to the concepts of traditional African views of marriage against the Christian views of marriage. Whereas African culture promotes a patrilocal family setting characterised by interdependence and collectivism, Christianity is understood to encourage a neolocal family setting characterised by independence and individualism. These findings suggest that there exists a dialectic model of relationship between Christianity and African culture. The dialectic model holds the view that Christianity and culture are opposed to each other and the contrast between the two can only be resolved by culture yielding to the demands of the gospel. This was evident where respondents

prioritized Christian views and values over traditional African cultural views and practices. All of these concepts are represented in Figure 6 below.
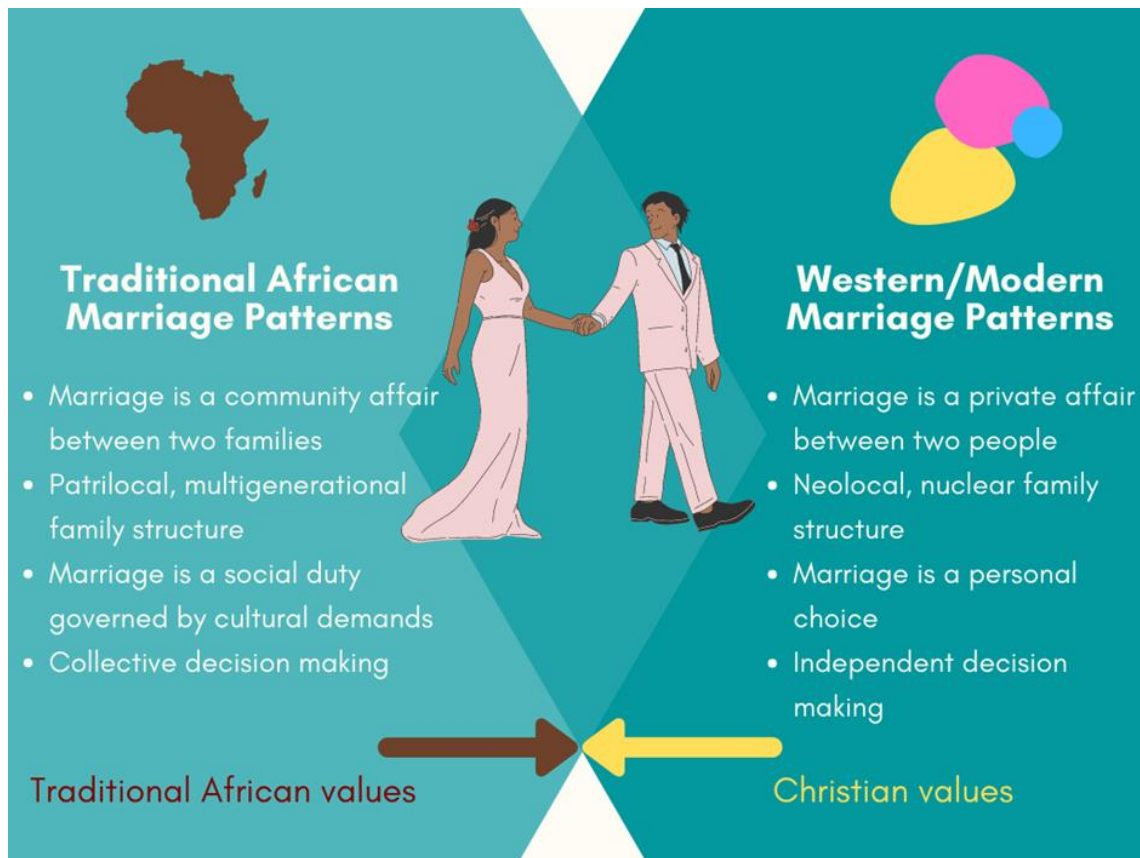
Figure 6: Key concepts from the research findings

Chapter 4: Discussion of the Findings

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the impact of communalism on modern African Christian couples living in urban South Africa. The primary research question addressed in this study is how African communalism influences the marriages of modern African Christian couples in urban South Africa.

In the previous chapter, I presented the themes that I have observed emerging from the data collected. The themes that emerged were (1) family involvement, (2) the effect of family involvement on the marital relationship, (3) communal society, (4) cultural practices and (5) the influence of Christianity. From the exploration of these themes, the following findings became apparent (in line with the three research objectives of the study):

Research objective one: to establish the views and experiences of modern African Christian couples concerning communalism in marriage.

The research findings have revealed that modern African Christians experience communalism through the involvement of their families in their marriage. The families of African Christian couples were found to be very involved in the marriage process despite the respondents desiring to make decisions independently from their families. Failing to be autonomous during the marriage process, respondents achieved this independence from their families by limiting their families' involvement in their daily lives. The research findings also revealed that there is gradual moving away from the communal African way of life by young Africans towards a more individualistic modern way of life. This is not unique to African society and its culture because culture is not static. Culture grows and changes over time as a result of invention, discovery, environment, diffusion, and acculturation (Sibani 2018:63-65). It is evident that African culture has changed and is changing as a result of human interaction and cultural contact with Western culture and modern culture. Traditional African family values appear to be diminishing in urban settings where there is a preference for nuclear family patterns. As much as respondents were

evidently in favour of modern ways of living and were critical of traditional African values and customs, respondents did however recognise the advantages of a collective system for personal development and a healthy marriage.

Research objective two: to determine if family involvement has a negative or positive effect on the couple's relationship.

The research findings revealed that the marriages of young Africans were positively impacted by the supportive and advisory role played by their families. However, when the families are excessively involved by trying to control the couples or making demands, it negatively affects the marital relationship. It is for this reason that the respondents limit their families' involvement in their daily lives.

Research objective three: to determine the relationship between the couple's views and experiences of communalism and their Christian faith.

The research findings revealed that there was tension between the values of traditional African marriage and the values of Christian marriage. In traditional African society, African families are patrilocal and polygamous, characterised by interdependence and collectivism while Christian families are neolocal and monogamous, characterised by independence and individualism. Young African Christians tend to find themselves caught between fulfilling the demands of African culture and upholding Christian values. In most cases, because of the teachings of missionary Christianity, the respondents neglect traditional African values in order to prioritize Christian values.

In this chapter, I will make an analysis using literature that relates to the study. The research findings will be discussed under five major concepts:

- Family involvement
- Effect of family involvement
- Communal society
- Cultural practices

- The influence of Christianity

These concepts are based on the themes which emerged as the research findings were analysed. The concepts are ordered this way in accordance with the research objectives.

My conceptualization for this analysis is structured around these five key analyses. Firstly, the traditional African marriage model is compared with the modern marriage model. It was a key finding that young Africans are moving towards modern values and therefore prefer a nuclear family system characterized by independence over the traditional communal family system.

In the second analysis, I discuss the effect of the family's involvement on the couple's relationship, comparing minimal family involvement against excessive family involvement. Modern African couples prefer minimal family involvement which they benefit from through the non-invasive supportive and advisory role families play. But the marital relationship is negatively affected by excessive family involvement which takes place when families assume control and exercise authority over the respondents.

Thirdly, values of collectivism are compared against individualistic values. It was a key finding that the respondents appreciated certain aspects of a communal society such as *ubuntu.* Respondents lamented the lack of *ubuntu* in modern society which they understood to be valuable to both society and marriage.

In the fourth analysis, African marriage is set against the challenges brought onto it by modernization. The cultural customs that form part of establishing African marriage (like *ilobolo*), are viewed by respondents as irrelevant to the contemporary context and are therefore modified by the respondents in their practice.

In the fifth and last analysis, I discuss Christianity and African culture, comparing Christian marriage values to the values of African marriage. Christian marriage is understood to be neolocal (where a couple's residence is located apart from the families of either spouse) while traditional African is patrilocal (where a couple's residence is located at the residence of the husband's family), involving not only living members of the family but also the dead. In this tension between Christianity and African culture, respondents were seen to follow conservative Christian teaching rather than the prescriptions of culture. This conservatism is not only a result of the shortcomings of past theologians in contextualising Christianity in Africa but is also a result of current academic work not being filtered down to the church level in order to influence church practice. Both African culture and church practice are continuously evolving, creating a need to keep up with these changes.

4.2 Family involvement: traditional marriage model vs modern marriage model

In this section, I will discuss how the respondents experienced and viewed their families' involvement in their marriage. The findings reveal that Millennial Africans prefer a modern model of marriage which allows for freedom and independence in comparison to a traditional marriage model which is governed by collective values. However, family involvement remains a key issue for marriage in Africa because for Africans, marriage is not an individual matter, but a family affair, creating a bond not just between two individuals but between two families. In African communities, a person is never an isolated individual but is an inherently communal being embedded in social relationships characterised by interdependence (Mabovula 2011:39). As a result, African families have a commitment and responsibility towards the marriage unions of the clan (Smith 2001:40, Baloyi 2014:28). Not only do families actively participate in the marriage process since African marriage is made up of a series of meetings, negotiations, and ceremonies (Welch 1933:23, Hastings 1973:30), but families also participate in the marriage itself by providing support and advice and by mediating when marital disputes arise (Smith 2001:140, Makwanise and Masuku 2016:3, Mohlatlole et al. 2017:256).

4.2.1 Preference for independent decision-making

The collective nature of a traditional family model was evident in how the families of the respondents were involved in the marriage process. The families played a significant role by facilitating the process of *ilobolo*, planning, and assisting in the wedding. In doing so, the families participated in and controlled the decision-making process. Respondents were restricted from taking initiative and making decisions independently during the marriage process because they had to consult with their families so that decisions could be made collectively. This is a result of the hierarchical nature of traditional African households where family members are graded by seniority and no decision can be made without the consent and participation of the senior members of the family (Bascom 1942:37). As juniors, respondents were subject to the authority of their parents and other senior family members, having to obey their instructions. Statements like "*as children you can't just call a meeting to say whatever you want; you have to do it in a certain way*" (R3WL39) and "*some of the things that we had to do were things that they actually wanted us to do and not things that we wanted*" (R2WL1) are evidence of how the respondents' independence is limited within the traditional family model.

The findings revealed that the respondents did not appreciate having no control over the decision-making process, identifying it as a disadvantage of their families' involvement. This points to a preference for a modern individualistic family system which allows more room for decisions to be made independently. The following statement demonstrates this: "*They did it like any other parental thing like putting me in school, but this was supposed to be different, I feel I should have had input*" (R1HL98). This points to a complete lack of autonomy in the traditional African family system.

The quest for independence is evident in the fact that all the respondents made an independent decision to marry and selected their own mates even when their families had sought to influence their decision. Statements like "*I married him anyway*" (R1W37) show that respondents continued with their independent decisions even when advised otherwise. It is evident that the influence of parents

on their children's marriage partner has become a matter of agreeing to a choice already made (Little and Price 1967:409). In traditional society, parents had a say in who their children married, even going so far as choosing a marriage partner for their child without the children's involvement (Raphalalani and Musehane 2013:19). Parental authority is seemingly diminishing seeing that it is futile for parents to refuse the choices of their children as they insist on their choices, even when they go against their parent's advice (Onwurah 1982:53). This also points to the respondents' openness to challenging authority, a result of the Millennial's prioritization of protecting their independence and freedom. Challenging authority is a foreign concept in traditional African society since traditional society is hierarchal and limits individual to a specific place in the social hierarchy (Van der Walt 1988:12). Traditional Africans prioritize maintaining the social balance to such an extent that they suppress their views and opinions if they are contrary to their senior's (Haselau et al. 2015:177). It is evident that the respondents do not hold to these traditional social values but rather align with modern values.

This finding is also supported by Onwurah's account that marriage is becoming more of a matter of personal choice and less of an arrangement between families where elders have a dominant say (Onwurah 1982:53). Instead of being initiated by parents as was done in traditional African society, marriage in contemporary Africa is initiated by the young Africans themselves, usually on the basis of feelings of love (Little and Price 1967:408). Africans marrying for personal fulfilment implies that African marriage has moved away from its purpose of sustaining the family linage by being solely aimed at procreation (Smith 2001:131). This was evident in how Respondent 2W who indicated that her father who is a "*traditional man*" (R2W67) was expecting grandchildren early into the marriage on the basis that "*you don't get married without a reason to have a child*" (R2W68). But she was not giving into the pressure because her and her husband had decided on their own when it will be the right time to have children (once they have purchased a home of their own). This modern model of marriage that privileges individual choice and interpersonal emotions can be understood to be not only a result of Westernization, but also a result of increasing education and urban migration which results in exposure to contemporary ideas about family (Smith 2001:147, Mohlabane et al. 2019:164).

The findings also revealed the effects of respondents making decisions independently from the opinions of families. It often resulted in tension and conflict between the respondents and their families. Statements like "*they were very unhappy, at some stage they threatened not to come to the wedding*" (R6WL365) exemplify the level of disagreements which would result when respondents made decisions independently from their families. Traditional Africans are known to prioritize maintaining the social balance and living in harmony at all costs therefore avoiding voicing their opinions when they are contrary to those of authoritative figures – particularly since this can be viewed as disrespect and disloyalty (Haselau et al. 2015:177). It is evident that contemporary Africans do not uphold such social values since they are open to challenging parental authority and cultural prescriptions in their exercise of freedom and independence. This is characteristic of Millennials who do not hesitate to challenge traditionally defined statuses and roles of authority (Knoetze 2017:19). The values of modernism with its emphasis on human mastery driven by freedom and independence are seen to triumph over traditional values in contemporary African society.

4.2.2   Preference for a private wedding

It was also evident that respondents were not inclined to the traditional understanding of marriage as a public event. Community involvement is the idea behind African weddings accommodating so many people. Respondents were not in favour of big weddings due to the financial implications big weddings carry with them. For example, one respondent indicated that "*I wanted something small with less people and I wanted to spend as little as possible*" (R2WL8). However, respondents with such desires could not see such desires fulfilled because they had to submit to their families' preferences for a big wedding. Statements like "*We honestly wanted to just go sign for a marriage certificate cause we were like 'we're not spending two hundred thousand on a wedding', but they were not hearing it*" (R6WL185) show how the respondents' preference for a private wedding was not accommodated. This finding aligns with de Haas' study that established that the educated elite African prefers a small wedding because of the expenses incurred

with a big wedding, but such preferences are not considered because they must comply with their family's expectations of big celebrations (de Haas 1984:180-181).

This finding demonstrates how young Africans get caught up between traditional beliefs and modern ways of living (Knoetze 2017:18). It also reflects how communal societies prioritizes the collective over an individual's preference (Welch 1933:22). This is acknowledged by scholars as one of the disadvantages of communalism – the over-appreciation of the community which results in the under-appreciation of the individual (Van der Walt 1988:11). This under-appreciation of the individual fuels the preference for modern ways of living amongst African Millennials because they are a generation that values their independence and freedom. Millennials are identified as the "Me Me Me Generation" (Stein 2013:1) on account of their sense of entitlement and resistance to give up their independence and freedom. This has led to Millennials being identified as narcissists since they have come of age in an era of "quantified self" and less community involvement (Stein 2013:2).

4.2.3 Preference for a nuclear family structure

As much as it was established that the parents played an advisory and supportive role in the lives of the respondents, it was evident that respondents choose to live their day-to-day lives independently from their families. Statements like "*we're just living our life separately from any decision that they might influence*" (R5WL112) demonstrate this. This kind of independence is firstly a value of Western models of marriage which define marriage as an individual contract between two individuals. It is the basis for the nuclear family structure set out in a neolocal setting. Traditional African family life, however, is set out in a multigenerational patrilocal setting, reflecting the interdependence of the married couple on the rest of the family. Such interdependence is a result of a collective understanding of personhood which maintains that a person is never an independent entity, but a person forms an integral part of society whom he is interconnected with (Van der Walt 1988:8, Mawere and Mubaya 2016:101). Younger generation Africans have evidently adopted modern family values associated with the West in place of the traditional African family structure because of the value they attach to independence.

Additionally, the independence displayed by the respondents in their day-to-day living can also be understood as an influence of the respondents' Christian faith. The Christian understanding that marriage is a covenant between two people dictates that there be some detachment from one's family in order to form an attachment to the person with whom the covenant is made (Khathide 2011:115). Christian marriage is therefore lived out in a neolocal setting based on the strict understanding of Genesis 2:24 that once married, couples need to separate from their parents in order to live in complete unity as a couple, forming a new family (Mugambi 2002:527). This kind of family setting discourages the involvement of extended family in the marriage (Krige 1981:151). This understanding of marriage is strikingly different from the traditional African understanding that a new marriage is a continuation of the family through the sustenance of the family lineage as a result of the production of offspring in the new marriage (Baloyi 2013b:168). The understanding of marriage as a continuation and growth of the family is what necessitated African marriage to be lived out within a patrilocal family structure (de Haas 1984:313).

This contrast places the African views of marriage at opposite ends with Christian views of marriage. This means young Africans not only get caught up between traditional beliefs and modern ways of living as previously stated, but contemporary Africans also get caught up between traditional beliefs and Christian beliefs. Ngundu (2011) best explains the confusion and conflict that confronts African Christians at marriage:

> "At marriage, every African Christian couple, especially in mission-founded churches, is confronted with three 'worlds' - the world of the traditional culture to which most parents of marrying-age children belong; the world of the civil or legal system under which the couple, like other citizens, live; and the world of the predominantly westernised culture that prevails in the church, especially in urban areas, within which the couple generally worship." (Ngundu 2011:35).

In summary, it is evident that contemporary African couples prefer a Western and modern family model characterized by independence over the traditional African family model which is characterised by interdependence. The under-appreciation of the individual in the traditional African family setting can be interpreted as the main reason behind the respondents' preference for a nuclear family structure. Young Africans do not appreciate their preferences being overridden by their families on the basis of seniority. As much as respondents understand their place in the social unit, they place a high value on their independence and freedom, resulting in them challenging traditionally defined roles of authority. They therefore prefer a model of marriage which is characterized by privacy, freedom, and autonomy instead of the traditional African marriage model which is rigidly fixed on principles of duty and collectivism.

4.3 Effect of family involvement on marital relationship: minimal family involvement vs excessive family involvement

In this section, I will discuss how the respondents perceived and defined the effect of their families' involvement on their marriage. The findings reveal that the positivity and negativity of family involvement in marriage essentially reduces back to the same concept of minimal family involvement being advantageous to the marital relationship of modern Africans.

The involvement of families in a marriage is known to have both negative and positive aspects. Family involvement can result in the curtailing of the couple's freedom especially when senior family members are domineering. When excessive, family involvement becomes a tool of oppression and abuse because it overrides the rights of the couple (Baloyi 2014:29) and undermines the couple's authority in making decisions (Khathide 2011:117). This can cause frustration and conflict in the couple's relationship. Also, because of the concepts of *ukukotiza* (the period after marriage where the bride lives with her in-laws under the supervision of her mother-in law), and *ukuhlonipha* (showing respect to) her in-laws, the wife is vulnerable to oppression in her in-laws' home. Such ill-treatment has potential of causing tension in the couple's relationship (de Haas 1984:204). This disadvantage of family

involvement is obviously deeply rooted in the status of women in African marriage. In traditional African society, the wife's primary role is to satisfy her husband sexually, to cook for him and to bear him children (Ogbu 1978:248, Sathiparsad et al. 2008:6). This is why among the Nguni's, the groom's family usually sings these words as they receive their new bride during the wedding celebrations: *"umakoti ungowethu, siyavuma, usengowethu ngempela, siya vuma, uzosiwashela asiphekele, siya vuma, sithi helele helele, siyavuma"* (the bride is ours, we approve, she is now ours indeed, we approve, she will wash for us and cook for us, we approve, we ululate (rejoice)." This reveals how the wife is viewed in traditional African marriage, therefore dictating how she is expected to behave.

A positive aspect of family involvement is how it encourages parental commitment and responsibility towards the marriages in the family (Baloyi 2014:28). Through this arrangement, newly married couples are initiated into marriage life and are offered support and assistance in times of need (Khathide 2011:117). Another advantage is how divorce is not easily decided upon because serious marital disputes are almost always mediated by extended family members (Smith 2001:140, Makwanise and Masuku 2016:3, Mohlatlole et al. 2017:256) and the decision to divorce must be consensual among family members (Khathide 2011:117, Baloyi 2014:28). Of course, this can only function as an advantage in cases where the reasons for divorce are unjustified, but it can easily become a disadvantage where the families do not provide their consent even though the reasons are justified.

4.3.1 Positive effect of family involvement

The findings revealed that the involvement of the families in the respondents' marriage had a positive effect on the marital relationships as long as their involvement was minimal. When the families' involvement was restricted to only providing advice and support, the respondents enjoyed a pleasant marriage experience. Statements like "*so I feel that their involvement, their advice, all the conversations we've had have positively affected our marriage and has just made things easier for us*" (R2WL141) are evidence of the positive effect of the families'

involvement on the marital relationship. Such an advisory role is perceived to still allow the respondents the freedom to make their own decisions since "*the nice thing about giving someone advice is that they can take the advice or not take it*" (R1WL66). This finding coincides with Baloyi's (2014) conclusion that since family intervention can undermine the couple's authority in decision-making, the family's role in a marriage should be limited to providing advice and to not dictate to the married couple (Baloyi 2014:29). Respondents evidently enjoyed the freedom that was afforded by their families' minimal involvement in their marriage – "*so there's that nice freedom that one has around to how we move forward with our lives. I guess I'm enjoying that freedom where we're not being told.*" (R3HL228).

Besides this positive effect of the families' minimal involvement reflecting the respondents' association with Millennial values of independence and freedom, it also points to a shift in cultural patterns in African society. While Western civilization has led to acculturation where African communities have adopted the beliefs and behaviour of the West, urbanization has resulted in the disintegration of the African family unit through rural-urban migration, resulting in the and distortion of traditional value systems. Due to this, it is difficult for families to be fully involved in the day-to-day lives of their married children because marriage is no longer lived out in a patrilocal setting. The degree of family involvement is also seen to be minimized by the disintegration of the family structure either through the absence of a parent, the death of a parent/s or the separation of the parents. Respondents who came from such fragmented families experienced far less family involvement in their marriage in comparison to their counterparts who came from functional families. One respondent whose parents are separated described his family as "*seeming almost absent*" (R3HL248) in terms of their involvement in the marriage in comparison to his wife who "*comes from a structured family*" (R3HL245) which actively participates in the marriage by drawing the couple in through frequent family gatherings. The respondents who came from such disintegrated families had no issue with their families' minimal involvement, but they did feel uncomfortable with having to be frequently around their in-laws. This discomfort and its effects will be discussed further in the next section.

4.3.2 Negative effect of family involvement

The respondents were seen to be negatively affected by their families' excessive involvement in their marriage since it led to tension and conflict in the marriage. One respondent admitted that "*in terms of the time that we spent at home and the involvement of the family…I think that did cause a bit of friction*" (R6WL352). This friction can be attributed to the fact that the respondents came from different family backgrounds and the spouse from a disintegrated family background (the male in both instances) felt uncomfortable with the frequent interactions with the in-laws because they are unfamiliar with the socializing tendencies of a functional family. One such respondent felt that "*her side of the family, it's not that they're pushing to be involved but they like to draw us in, but I'm not used to that*" (R3HL255). Because of this, there would be conflict and tension between the couple when visits had to be made to the in-laws.

This discomfort with the in-laws' excessive involvement can also be linked to the traditional understanding of the relationship between a groom and his in-laws. There is a lack of literature on the subject of the status of son-in-law in the African family structure since more studies focus on the daughter-in-law's status, but Khathide (2011) notes that there are usually no heavy demands on the son-in-law (Khathide 2011:113). It is common knowledge amongst Africans that a son-in-law is not meant to spend long periods of time with his in-laws. *Isithunzi sendoda* (a man's dignity) is diminished by frequent or long periods of time spent with his in-laws. This is why it is considered *ichilo* (a disgrace) for a man to take permanent residence at his wife's home. This is the basis of one male respondent's concern that by frequently visiting his in-laws he would appear to be a "*sbari-makoti*" (R6HL139) which is a son-in-law who behaves like a daughter-in-law since she is required to spend a lot of time around her in-laws. The understanding behind this reasoning is that since the man has paid the bride-wealth for his wife, he has acquired her as an additional member to his family, not the other way around. This again goes to show that as much as young Africans favour modern ways of living, they still hold on to certain traditional concepts and values.

In summary, it is evident that minimal family involvement positively affects the marital relationship of young African couples as it allows them the freedom to navigate their lives independently. Respondents are comfortable with the advisory role their families play as it still allows them the freedom to make their own decision seeing that advice is not binding and can be received or rejected. The findings also make it clear how excessive family involvement can negatively affect the marital relationship of modern African couples. When family involvement becomes excessive, it undermines the couple's freedom and independence, resulting in friction in the relationship.

4.4 Communal society: collectivism vs individualism

In this section, I will discuss the respondents' views and experiences of communalism by explaining how the respondents understood the communal values of African society and its bearing on their marriage. The findings reveal that modern Africans not only accurately understand African communal values, but they also find value in some traits of traditional communal society.

Communal values in African society are mainly founded upon the concept of *ubuntu* which can be defined as a kinship-oriented social order informed by an ethic of reciprocity (le Roux 2000:43, Mabovula 2011:38). *Ubuntu* is rooted in the Nguni proverb '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' (a person is a person through other persons) (Banda 2019:204). *Ubuntu* is a manifestation of the interconnectedness of human beings – the embodiment of African culture and African worldview which values community and interpersonal relationships (Haselau et al. 2015:174, Mawere and Mubaya 2016:99).

4.4.1   Preserved understanding of communal values

The findings revealed that the respondents had an accurate understanding of what *ubuntu* is and what it entails. This is an example of how well-preserved communal values are in urban communities. The preservation of communal values is rooted in

the fact that respondents grew up in environments where *ubuntu* was practiced. A respondent recalled her upbringing where they could "*pass down clothes to people who don't have or your neighbour who is younger than you would receive your clothes. You can help each other with food. You can go ask for sugar next door*" (R3WL360). This shows how the communal values instilled in their childhood still prevail, even though respondents live in urban environments characterised by individualism where "*each person is in their own cocoon…each person minds their own business*" (R6HL467). So, we see that even though respondents have an accurate understanding of communal values characteristic of traditional African society, they are restricted in practicing these values in urban areas since these areas are governed by Western social values.

Respondents understood *ubuntu* to mean community involvement and the interconnectedness between all community members, making them dependent upon one another. Respondents also understood the collective nature of African society to mean "*your experiences and encounters with other people make up the person that you are*" (R2WL230). This is the African understanding of personhood. In African society, a person's identity derives from a community because a person comes to know who he is through relationships with others (Gyekye 1997:43). Respondents also understood *ubuntu to be "an African thing but I think it applies everywhere" (R1HL185).* This understanding of *ubuntu* being applicable beyond the African context is based on the rationale that all human beings are social beings who are interdependent on one another. This aligns with scholars who stand with the view that although *ubuntu* is African in origin, it is not limited to the African context (Mawere and Mubaya 2016:98). In fact, Metz (2011) considers *ubuntu* to be an ethical theory which serves as a foundation for human rights, making it a moral campus for individuals and institutions in African society and all other societies (Metz 2011:534).

The findings also show that the respondents drew connections between African communal values and the teachings of the Bible. "*The real heart of ubuntu should be loving others, I can just take from Scripture, the second greatest commandment,*

love others as you love yourself" (R3HL380). In promoting harmonious relationships with others, *ubuntu* was understood to be consistent with the Biblical teaching of loving others. Another participant understood the phrase "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" to be similar to the Biblical phrase "*man cannot live alone*" (R2HL233) - speaking to how man is created a social being, similar to the communal view of personhood in African culture. Respondents finding similarities between African communal values and Biblical concepts points to how respondents do not always consider the relationship between African culture and Christianity from a dialectic perspective which holds the view that Christianity and culture are opposed to each other and irreconcilable (Ezeogu 1998:28). In fact, when asked whether they thought *ubuntu* contradicted the Biblical concept of 'leaving and cleaving', a majority of participants responded negatively, pointing out that the concepts could "*co-exist but with a bit of effort*" (R3WL429). This finding shows how certain elements of African culture and Christianity can be compatible and how there is room for Evangelical confessions to pursue efforts of reconciling Christianity and African culture, resulting in the enrichment and efficiency of both entities.

4.4.2   Appreciation of communal values

Despite the respondents favour for modern values, respondents displayed to be in favour of some traits of communal values of African society, such as the advisory role senior family members play in the lives of a married couple. Respondents understood the parent-child relationship to be timeless, believing that "*you don't stop being your parent's kid just because you're married*" (R5WL463). Respondents therefore understood themselves to still be part of the larger family unit. This is a collective understanding which upholds that an individual is never an isolated, independent entity but is from and will always be part of a community (Venter 2004:151). Statements like "*we don't know everything. So every time when we get stuck, it's nice to be able to go to them and ask for their advice*" (R1WL54) reflect the respondents need for their senior family members and their dependence on them in times of need. The supporting network provided through the extended family that the new family has in times of need has been identified by a few scholars as an advantage of the families' involvement in the marriage (Khathide 2011:117, Baloyi 2014:28). This finding agrees with de Haas' conclusion that the role played by

families in the lives of the couples is one of the persistent traditional values that survived the change in family life patterns brought about by modernization (de Haas 1984:310).

The respondents were aware of the changing patterns regarding *ubuntu* in African society since "*there isn't much community involvement*" (R3WL366) in the urban environment they lived in. This change in the practice of communal values is because of the set-up of urban neighbourhoods where "*we all live behind high walls*" (R3WL365). The private ownership of property characteristic of urban neighbourhoods is known to be a mechanism for cultivating an individualistic and materialistic philosophy (Davies 2005:313). Traditional African society, however, has a stewardship view of property which is why traditional rural areas hardly have any fences and why traditional Africans will not refer to their property as 'my land', but instead will refer to it as 'our land' (Van der Walt 1988:9). The lack of community involvement in urbanized areas is characteristic of modern society where individualism is the norm and is a direct effect of urbanization and Westernization. Respondents identified individualism which has been "*adopted*" (R6HL466) by contemporary Africans as a foreign concept which "*came with colonization*" (R6WL470). This lack of community involvement in modern society is further amplified by the narcissism, materialism, and self-obsession of the Millennial generation (Stein 2013:2). However, as much as the respondents are Millennials themselves and have consistently shown favour for Western and modern social values, they openly disapproved of individualism deteriorating the collective values of African society. Commenting on individualism, one respondent said, "*I don't like it because it doesn't work for me and I wasn't raised that way*" (R6HL466). Modern Africans still value communalism which is why the respondents expressed that they found community and lived out collective values through their churches, filling the gap that urbanization has created. One respondent expressed how "*we're quiet involved in our church. We're a community. We're not a community because we live next to each other but because we do life together*" (R3WL367). This finding shows how young African couples recognize certain traditional values as relevant (Gyekye 1997:218) and affirm that despite the changes brought about by urbanization, the

Black population of South Africa continue to value their sense of community (Sooryamoorthy and Makhaba 2016:313).

Respondents considered the concept of *ubuntu* to mean that community involvement is important for the success of a marriage "*because no one is so awesome that they can do marriage on their own*" (R1WL197). Respondents identified the community that was involved in their marriages as including their families, church community, friends, mentors, and other couples. This community provided counsel, assistance and held the couples accountable. Traditionally these functions were fulfilled by relatives and non-relatives that formed part of the patrilocal homestead that the couple became part of soon after marriage. This patrilocal setting has since been negatively impacted by urbanization and modernisation with its economic pressures, but it is evident how community involvement in marriage remains crucial for the marriages of contemporary Africans. Even within an individualistic society, Africans still believe that "*You can't do marriage without people*" (R1HL190).

In summary, it is clear that young African couples not only comprehend African communal values but appreciate some traits of traditional communal society. Respondents value *ubuntu* not just for its significance in society, but also for the success it directly contributes towards marriage through the advice and support the couple receives from extended family. In a way, this finding contrasts the previous findings where respondents were seen to prefer the individualistic characteristics of Western society. This points to how respondents may be conflicted between the values of traditional communal society and the values of modern society. This finding is confirmed by Knoetze (2017) who states that young Africans often get caught up between traditional beliefs and modern ways of living (Knoetze 2017:18). It also reaffirms that young Africans are not simply abandoning traditional practices in favour of modern ones, instead, they are integrating traditional and Western family modes, making the contemporary African family neither purely traditional nor purely Western (de Haas 1984:309, Meekers 1992:63, Smith 2001:132).

4.5 Cultural practices: African marriage vs Modernity

In this section, I will discuss the respondents' experiences and views of cultural practices involved in the African marriage process, more especially the common practice of the payment of *ilobolo*. This section reveals the respondents understanding of African marriage and the attempt by the Millennial African couples to modernize African marriage by modifying certain cultural aspects of African marriage which they deem outdated.

Cultural practices are a key issue in African marriage because African marriage is supported by social sanctions and those getting married are compelled to conform to certain cultural obligations. One such obligation is the payment of bride-wealth which is a custom of presenting a gift to the bride's people, practised all over Africa in varying degrees (Mbiti 1969:140). It is a cultural practice which is highly esteemed in African society because it is understood to validate a marriage (de Haas 1984:127) and to establish fellowship between the two families involved (Baloyi 2013a:21, Mubangizi 2012:4). Bride-wealth is also as a token of gratitude towards the bride's family, appreciating their role in raising her (Ansell 2001:706, Posel and Rudwick 2014:4, Yarbrough 2018:652) and for allowing her to be their bride (Khathide 2011:50).

4.5.1   Preserved understanding of *ilobolo*

All respondents were found to have participated in cultural practices, particularly the payment of *ilobolo*, as part of their marriage process. The findings revealed that the respondents' understanding of *ilobolo* is well-preserved despite the effects of westernization and modernization on traditional African marriage in urban society. The respondents understanding of *ilobolo* corresponds with the literature explored in Chapter 2. Respondents understood *ilobolo* to establish a relationship between the families by formally introducing the families to one another. They also understood *ilobolo* as a means of showing gratitude and respect to the bride's family. This accurate understanding of the practice is significant because the respondents live in urban areas as opposed to rural areas where traditional practices are generally well- preserved. This finding affirms scholars who put forward that the practice of *ilobolo* was among the few African values which persisted in the face of changing patterns brought about by modernization (de Haas

1984:309, Knoetze 2000:532, Ansell 2001:715). This finding also aligns with research studies which prove that despite the controversies surrounding it, *ilobolo* is a cultural practice that remains highly valued and practiced by South Africans, even in urban areas (Posel and Rudwick 2014:57, Mohlabane et al. 2019:171). As Mkhize (2011) put it, "although various pressures and influences of modernity and socio-economic conditions have brought both distortions and innovation to the *lobolo* custom, in general, the practice still constitutes the most preferred, revered and recognized gesture of cementing the marital bond" (Mkhize 2011).

It is of significance that the respondents did not express an understanding of the spiritual function of *ilobolo*. In its religious function, *ilobolo* functions to make the bride known to her new ancestors (Yarbrough 2018:660). The bride-wealth is also key in honouring the ancestors and having them accept a marriage, therefore attracting their blessing to the marriage (Posel and Rudwick 2014:63, Mkhize 2011). The slaughtering of an animal during the *ilobolo* process is meant to secure the ancestor's blessing (Mkhize 2011). However, the respondents did not engage in this religious aspect of *ilobolo*, avoiding certain elements in the process because of their Christian convictions. Conservative Christians are known to not practise certain cultural rituals, particularly those that involve the slaughtering of animals (Rudwick and Posel 2015:7). One respondent explained: "*I spoke to my dad about it, that since I'm Christian I prefer that we not do those things*." (R2WL205). It is evident that African Christians view *ilobolo* as a cultural rather than a spiritual requirement (Rudwick and Posel 2015:7).

4.5.2 The exploitation of *ilobolo* and unequal gender relations

Respondents emphasised the correct meaning of *ilobolo* against distorted meanings of the *ilobolo* which result in high costs of *ilobolo*. Respondents expressed that when *ilobolo* is done outside of its true purpose, it leads to grooms "*feeling like they were being robbed on the spot*" (R3HL286) because the exchange is no longer about relationship-building but has turned into a "*transaction*" (R3HL287). High costs for *ilobolo* are sometimes requested with the intention of

making personal gain because "*some people can be greedy and selfish*" (R5WL382) - this is how greed distorts the meaning of *ilobolo* (Khathide 2011:51).

The commercialization of *ilobolo* has been identified by scholars to be rooted in the change in the form that *ilobolo* was presented in. Originally *ilobolo* was in the form of cattle but change in this medium to money, from a thing to use to a thing to buy, has contributed to the commercialization of the practice (Welch 1933:26, Khathide 2011:51). A change in attitudes concerning what factors determining the *ilobolo* amount has also played a role in *ilobolo* being commercialized. Whereas the girl's attribute as a hard worker and as a virgin used to be factors that contributed to the bride-wealth amount, the girl's social and economic status have become more crucial contributing factors in modern society (Baloyi 2013a:27). It has been common practice for more cattle or money to be requested for a girl who had received formal education (Khathide 2011:51, Kuper 2016:17). Respondents felt strongly against *ilobolo* being used as a means to repay parents for educating their children because as a parent, "*it's my job to raise my kids, get them through school, get them through university, for them to be launched very well into their life*" (R3HL316).

The findings show how the high amounts required for *ilobolo* present a challenge to young Africans, making it difficult for them to marry. *Ilobolo* becomes a "*barrier*" (R6WL427) that leads to blacks "*marrying at the age forty-five*" (R6WL430). This finding coincides with the findings of one study that established that a majority of Zulu men identified *ilobolo* as an impediment to marriage (Posel and Rudwick 2014:53). Such high payments for *ilobolo* not only delay marriage for Africans but also force young Africans to depart from tradition either through court marriage or replacing marriage with cohabitation. In recent years, the marriage rate has drastically decreased while the cohabitation rate has increased amongst black South Africans (Moore and Govender 2013:623). Respondents expressed that young Africans resort to cohabitation because "*it's very expensive to get married*" (R6WL387). This statement is supported by research findings that link the increased

cohabitation rate amongst black South Africans to the high costs of *ilobolo* (Posel and Rudwick 2014, Moore and Govender 2013, Sennott et al. 2021).

Some of the respondents also blamed the exploitation of *ilobolo* for the abuse of women in marriage under the incorrect notion that the high payment for her bride-wealth equates to purchasing her. *iLobolo* being considered as a transaction "provides a rationale for the unequal position of women in the household" (Ansell 2001:711). This is because when bride-wealth is understood as a transaction that purchases the wife, the wife is considered to be the property of the husband and can therefore be treated anyhow (Knoetze 2000:533, Mazibuko 2016:7373). High bride-wealth costs can also trap women in abusive marriages because some families will avoid returning the large *ilobolo* payment (Ogbu 1978:252). Instead, "*even if your daughter is not being treated well there you still send your daughter back*" (R4HL245) instructing her to persevere in an abusive marriage. In this way, the need to repay *ilobolo* in case of a divorce has the potential of trapping women in abusive and unhealthy marriages (Rudwick and Posel 2015:9, Mazibuko 2016:7374). *iLobolo* can therefore be seen as a source of unequal gender relations in African marriage. The rationale is that because the husband has paid *ilobolo*, he deserves unreserved respect and acknowledgement as the head of the household (Rudwick and Posel 2015:6). This patriarchal hierarchy by which the traditional African household is organized, subordinates women to men.

Millennial Africans appear to have an egalitarian understanding of marriage rather than a patriarchal understanding. They perceive the traditional patriarchal understanding of *ilobolo* to be "*very one-dimensional*" (R6WL385), failing to recognize that the man's family "*get an addition to their family but so does ours. They have a son that they did not have. I'm going to add value, but so does he*" (R6WL381). Ogbu (1978) has noted this one-sided view of the function of *ilobolo* as only beneficial to the man and his family and goes on to explain that women also stand to gain through the payment of *ilobolo*. "In legitimation of marriage, bridewealth elevates the man to the status of a husband and the woman to the status of a wife. As a husband and a wife they incur reciprocal rights and obligations

for which they are held accountable" (Ogbu 1978:256). This patriarchal view of *ilobolo* does not align with the contemporary understandings of a woman's status in marriage, which is another reason why some young African couples grapple with the question of the relevance of *ilobolo* in their modern context (Ansell 2001:709).

4.5.3 The relevancy of *ilobolo*

Respondents differed in opinion concerning the relevance of the practice of *ilobolo* in today's society. Some respondents, mostly male, believed *ilobolo* to be relevant. Even though these respondents advocated for its continuance, they did indicate a need for *ilobolo* to be done differently, addressing the grievances identified in the previous section. Statements such as "*I would apply a different method. I wouldn't treat it as if I'm selling my daughter*" (R4HL249) make this clear. This finding affirms that despite the controversies surrounding it, *ilobolo* is a cultural practice that remains highly valued by Africans (Posel and Rudwick 2014:57, Mohlabane et al. 2019:171). In defending the relevancy of *ilobolo*, one respondent pointed to the need to take ownership and to "*take pride*" (R6H435) in the practice as Africans. The feeling of pride in their culture is common amongst young Africans (Ansell 2011:711), in most cases rooted in the need to challenge white Western models of living (de Haas 1984:310).

The respondents who argued against the relevancy of *ilobolo,* who were mostly female respondents*,* referred to it as "*outdated*" (R4WL218) and "*completely irrelevant*" (R1WL159) in the modern context. This was on the basis of the difference between the context of marriage in years passed compared to now. "*Long ago you would get married and be taken care of hundred percent by the family of the husband or the husband and you'll be expected to sit there and serve them. These days it's different, you contribute*" (R4WL222). The respondent here is referring to the changes brought about by the change in the status of women through their participation in the labour force. Such social changes have made marriage in the modern African context different to when the husband was the sole provider of the household. It is against this background that one respondent indicated that ilobolo needed to be "*further developed to fit into the culture we now live in*" (R1WL161).

It is also possible that the female respondents considered the practice of *ilobolo* to no longer be relevant against the background of the emancipation of women in contemporary South Africa. i*Lobolo* can be easily perceived as a violation of women's rights since it subordinates women to men therefore curtailing a woman's freedom and independence (Makwanise and Masuku 2016:5, Sennott et al. 2021:63). Respondent 6W outlined how through paying *ilobolo*, the husband gains a sense of "*ownership*" (R6WL409) over the woman. "*When you come into a man's family once he pays lobolo for you, you're there to serve him. And it's one dimensional, it's not reciprocal*" (R6WL412). Female respondents were concerned about the equal treatment of man and wife in African marriage. In response to being required to undergo the practice of *ukuyalwa* (to be given advice), Respondent 4W said: "*I don't think this thing is relevant because you are telling me how to behave but you will not be telling the husband how to behave*" (R4WL67). *Ukuyalwa* is a custom where the bride is given advice by older women concerning how she needs to conduct herself in marriage (Makwanise and Masuku 2016:11). It is only the wife who would receive such advice, implying that she alone needed to be careful of her behaviour in marriage. The respondents are obviously uncomfortable with the one-dimensional worldview of African marriage. It is evident that young Africans embrace an egalitarian model of marriage and not the patriarchal model characteristic of traditional African society.

Seeing that all respondents underwent the custom of the payment of *ilobolo*, even those who found it irrelevant, points to how binding cultural practices are and how they are done out of social duty regardless of the individuals views concerning them. This again affirms how communal societies prioritizes the collective over an individual's preference (Welch 1933:22).

4.5.4   Modification of cultural practices

Even though respondents fulfilled cultural obligations by participating in the payment of *ilobolo*, some were seen to participate on their own terms. This can be seen as Millennial Africans integrating cultural practices with modernity, which in in turn

results in the distortion of culture. Respondents modified cultural practices out of the view that "*culture has to serve you*" (R6W426) by making your life better, but when culture becomes a barrier, it has to be reconsidered. A few female respondents had their own ideas about how the *ilobolo* money was to be charged and spent. This is a deviation from tradition because culture dictates that the bride and groom be excluded from matters related to the *ilobolo* payment since the issue is strictly handled by senior members of the family (Mkhize 2011). This finding corresponds with Rudwick and Posel (2015) who present evidence of the attempts that women make to assert agency in how *ilobolo* is practised (Rudwick and Posel 2015:2). These women do so most likely because of modern understandings of a woman's status. No longer restricted by patriarchal limitations, a woman has freedom to voice her thoughts and preferences.

Traditionally, *ilobolo* is to be strictly received by the girl's parents (Khathide 2011:113), but one couple insisted that the money not be directly received by anyone, but instead "*every money that was coming in was not even mine or ours, it was gonna go towards our wedding 'cause that's how we had planned our finances*" (R5WL49). We see here how the couple modified tradition in order to prioritize their personal financial goals. Cultural practices that involved gift-giving ceremonies were also modified due to finances. One couple did not perform the traditional wedding, stating that "*we'll do it when we're all financially ready*" (R3WL16) while another couple did not plan on following through with similar gift-giving ceremonies because "*we didn't see a need, especially we thought of it financially*" (R5WL286). Another study has noted that contemporary Africans do not see the need to fulfil all the cultural practices linked to marriage because of the money involved (Rudwick and Posel 2015:10). Finances are seen to play a pivotal role in when and if cultural practices are performed by modern Africans. This can be understood to be a result of the importance contemporary Africans place on financial stability.

Another example is how one respondent contested that the bride-wealth calculations exclude the charges for her education. "*I told mom that she must not make the mistake to charge anything for education there because once she charges for education, it will be difficult for me to defend myself when I want to support them*

at home" (R4WL55). Traditionally, the amount charged for the bride-wealth would be determined using factors such as girl's attribute as a hard worker and as a virgin, but over the years, the girl's social and economic status has also become contributing factors (Baloyi 2013a:27), resulting in more cattle being required for a girl who has received a formal education (Khathide 2011:51, Kuper 2016:17). Although the respondents of both genders in this study were against this development in *ilobolo* negotiations, educated women in particular have been noted to reject the educational and professional status of a woman being considered as a contributing factor in determining *ilobolo* (Rudwick and Posel 2015:11). The respondent refuted this practice on the basis of her being a breadwinner who would need to continue taking care of her family even after getting married. If the price for her education would be included in the *ilobolo* amount required, it would mean she could no longer send money home, because through paying *ilobolo* her husband would have ownership over her profession and the income it generates. Another study supports this understanding by explaining how one husband, in order to deter his father-in-law from charging for his daughter's education, threatened to ensure that the daughter would not be able to send money to her parents after she married him (Mathis 2011:845).

This finding points to the complexity of post-apartheid South African families. Because a majority of black South African parents have little to no education and live below the poverty threshold, such parents, particularly female-headed houses, view their children as sources of income (Mathis 2011:845). To some degree, educating an African child is considered an investment because when African parents take a child to school, they do so with the hope that after the child has completed their education, they will become the breadwinner (Khathide 2011:118). This is a concept that black middle-class South Africans have termed 'black tax'. 'Black tax' can be defined as an obligation an individual has to do to support their extended family as a result of the continued inequality caused by the apartheid legacy (Magubane 2016:1). This obligation can be momentary (until other family members find employment) but in most cases, it is a life-time commitment. Complications are therefore bound to arise when such a breadwinner gets married.

Respondents were seen to also modify cultural practices in order to not go against their Christian beliefs. Born-again Christians avoid any interaction with the dead because they consider consulting the dead to be idolatry (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:369). The slaughtering of an animal during the *ilobolo* process is meant to secure the ancestor's blessing (Mkhize 2011) but conservative Christians do not practise certain cultural rituals that involve the slaughtering of animals (Rudwick and Posel 2015:7). One respondent explained: "*I spoke to my dad about it, that since I'm Christian I prefer that we not do those things.*" (R2WL211). Other couples modified their gift-giving ceremony (which is the essence of the traditional wedding) to exclude giving gifts to dead family members. They "*didn't do the formal traditional umabo*" (R5HL289), instead they informally gave gifts to those who they deemed were supposed to get the gifts (obviously avoiding dead family members). Another couple completely avoided the gift-giving aspect of the traditional wedding because "*they wanted to gift people who had already passed away*" (R6WL360). For this reason, their traditional wedding was structured to just inform the bride of the "*family history, what they expect and there were speeches, that's all there was*" (R6WL361). Other respondents completely avoided other cultural practices and only conducted the *ilobolo* payment.

4.5.5 Multiplied cultural practices in rural areas

The results suggest that couples with strong ties to rural areas are more likely to experience a longer marriage process which includes a number of cultural ceremonies during the marriage process. The one couple whose homes were in a rural Eastern Cape were the only couple who had not concluded the *ilobolo* payment, even though they had been married for just over a year. This is because they experienced a lengthier *ilobolo* process which constituted multiple payments which were required of the groom until he reached "half". The negotiations had outlined that the bride would be handed over after the groom had reached "half" the amount requested for *ilobolo*. The amount was not necessarily disclosed because the groom's negotiators had been instructed that "*just keep coming back until you hear from us that you are now at half the price*" (R4WL45). The process was therefore long and unpredictable.

Three of the couples indicated at least one other cultural practice that they needed to undergo in their marriage process, in most cases a gift-giving ceremony. But the one couple that had rural ties indicated a number of other ceremonies - *ukuyalwa*, *utsiki* - including an outstanding ceremony – *ibhakede* - which awaits the completion of the *ilobolo* payment. Another study supports this finding by pointing out the ceremonies involved in the marriage process in rural KwaZulu Natal which took two years for one couple to fulfil (Rudwick and Posel 2015:9). For this couple, *ilobolo* negotiations could not begin until the groom had paid *inhlawulo* (the fine for impregnating the girl before marriage), then following *ilobolo* was *umembeso* and *umbondo*.

The marriage process is lengthier and involves more cultural practices in the rural areas most likely because culture is well preserved in rural areas compared to urban areas where culture has been diluted by Western culture. This could mean that the influence of communalism on marriages is possibly greater in rural areas than in urban areas because there is more interaction between the couples and their families.

In summary, it is evident that *ilobolo* remains a highly valued cultural practice in African society even though the practice is surrounded by many controversies. African Christians have accurate understanding of *ilobolo* but only uphold it as a cultural requirement for marriage and not a religious requirement. The respondents were aware of and were strongly opposed against the exploitation of *ilobolo*. Millennial Africans value an egalitarian model of marriage which prioritizes women's rights and therefore finds the patriarchal aspects of *ilobolo* payment irrelevant to their urban context. Because of this irrelevancy, respondents modify cultural practices in order to integrate them with modernity and their Christian beliefs. It was also apparent that respondents with strong ties to rural environments were prone to undergo a lengthier marriage process and participate in more cultural practices in comparison to those with homes in urban areas.

4.6 Christian faith influence: Christianity vs African culture

In this section, I will discuss the connection between the respondents' views of communalism and their Christian faith. It was apparent that the respondent's views of communalism were influenced by their Christian faith to such an extent that they rejected some communal values and cultural practices. This is most likely because of the kind of Christianity that the respondents associate with. The participants belonged to independent denominations that associate with Evangelical confessions, including Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. Because of their roots in missionary Christianity, these denominations hold a dialectic approach to the relationship between Christianity and African culture. This results in born-again African Christians prioritizing their faith over African culture and as a result neglecting traditional African values and customs (Mugambi 2002:519, Balcomb 2016:121).

4.6.1   The Church's interference with family involvement

Through the findings, it was evident that another key role player in the respondent's marriage was the Christian community. The respondents described the place of the church's marriage procedures as well as the teaching and counsel provided by the church family. One churches' marriage procedure was seen to interfere with the family's involvement since this procedure limited the families' involvement by excluding the family in the early stages of the marriage process. Respondent 1H commented that "*the entire process was at church until they said now I can tell my parents*" (R1HL70). In this instance, the church's involvement particularly interfered with the family's role of consenting to the marriage seeing that the family only found out about the marriage after the couple had already agreed on it before church officials. The Christian community supposes that the consent for marriage is limited to the two people getting married since it is their God-given right to make decisions independently (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:366). This is because Christian marriage is understood to be an arrangement based on the free choice of individuals, not an agreement between families (Krige 1981:151). Christianity can therefore be seen to encourage independent decision-making, similar to the values of Western culture. By doing so, Christianity fails to uphold that marriage in Africa is a family affair and

therefore leads to forfeiting the benefits of the family's involvement in a marriage, including preserving marriage. Traditional African marriages are known to last longer than Western marriages (Welch 1933:21) and this is a result of, among other things, the involvement of families. Makwanise and Masuku (2016) best demonstrate how the family's involvement would preserve marriages in communal African society:

> "The involvement of the whole family and community meant that the entire community acted as a source of unconditional social support, thus ensuring the success of the couple's marriage. In the case of a conflict between the two, the relatives would be more than willing to assist, which would guarantee that any conflict was dealt with peacefully without resorting to divorce. This differs considerably from the modern-day approach, in which marriage is viewed as a contract exclusively between the two people concerned, and if they decide to end the marriage nobody questions them, as nobody else would have been involved in the first place" (Makwanise and Masuku 2016:3).

Another respondent recalled her pastor's instructions to the family during the wedding ceremony: "'*You need to allow them to come to you to ask for help but you shouldn't be like imposing yourself on them*'" (R3WL116). This perspective is rooted in the teachings of Christian missionaries who held the perception that the involvement of families in a marriage is a threat and hinderance to the freedom of the individuals getting married (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:366). This is a result of Christian missionaries imposing Western culture with its individualism on the Africans being evangelized on the assumption that Western culture was 'Christian', while the collective nature of African culture was considered to be inferior and dismissed as 'pagan' and 'heathen' (Mugambi 2002:518, Vähäkangas 2004:55). After all, the Protestant Reformation promoted the view that salvation was a personal matter which occurs as a process strictly between an individual and God (Cohen and Hill 2007:710). Because Protestant Christianity focused strongly on a personal relationship with God, the missionaries did not resonate with religion like

that of Africans which is based on community affiliation, social relationships, tradition, and ritual (Cohen and Hill 2007:711).

Such views of family involvement being a hindrance to the couple's autonomy obviously do not acknowledge the hierarchal nature of African society and the African family structure. What can be interpreted as an 'imposition' from a modern perspective can simply be understood as an exercise of 'parental authority' from a traditional point of view. It is on the basis of their seniority that parents advise their married children and even prescribe to them, in most cases without even being asked (Van der Walt 1994:389). In the hierarchy of traditional African families, even though individuals acquire the full status of 'adult' through marrying (Preston-Whyte 1981:160, de Haas 1984:137, Ansell 2001:703, Mohlabane et al. 2019:156), they remain children in the ranks of seniority and are therefore subjected to parental authority. Because young African Christians remain limited to the place of being juniors in the social hierarchy, they cannot necessarily resist their families 'imposing' themselves on them. Also, their family's 'invasive' actions cannot always be easily dismissed because they are perceived to be part of the family's responsibility because in the traditional African context, parents have a commitment and responsibility towards the marriages of their children (Baloyi 2014:28).

It emerged that the church shares the same advisory role as the families. The church was also found to be involved in the respondents' marriage through its teachings and counsel to the respondents. In fact, some respondents indicated that they were influenced more by their church community compared to their families and that they sought counsel from the church rather than their families. One respondent explained that "*we go where we feel that the help we're going to get fits into our lifestyle*" (R3WL111) because they did not share the same Christian values with their family. This again points to how much the respondents prioritize their Christian faith by choosing not to seek help where the counsel might go against their faith. In fact, by preferring to seek help from their church community rather than their own families, respondents clearly show how they do not hold the traditional view that it is an embarrassment to the family to expose one's marriage problems

to outsiders which is why traditional African families mediate the marital problems of the marriages within it (Khathide 2011:117) instead of allowing couples to seek help from professionals like marriage counsellors.

4.6.2 Criticism of the church

The respondents were found to not only challenge authority in their families', but even in their churches as well. One respondent disagreed with the one-dimensional teachings of the church mothers because of how they would "*make it sound like when you come into a man's family once he pays lobolo for you, you're there to serve him*" (R6WL412). The respondent goes on to acknowledge that these teachings are based on traditional African understanding of a woman's status in marriage. The traditional African household is organised in a patriarchal hierarchy (Knoetze 2017:18), according the father the head of the household and therefore subordinating the wife to the man. Unlike other African cultural ideologies which are not accommodated in Christianity, this ideology of the woman's status in marriage is apparently given room in the church because of the similarity between the traditional African household and the Jewish household structure depicted in the Christian Bible. Both are organised in a patriarchal hierarchy. This points to how African Culture and Christianity are not complete opposites as the Christian missionary enterprise portrayed it to be. The respondent is here challenging this perception of the wife's status which is not only true to the nature of Millennials who do not hesitate to challenge traditionally defined statuses (Knoetze 2017:19) but also points to the young Africans disagreement with patriarchal models of marriage and family. Because of education and the exposure it brings to contemporary ideas about family and gender roles (Mohlabane et al. 2019:164), modern Africans prefer egalitarian models of marriage instead of patriarchal models of marriage.

Another couple was critical of their church's' marriage procedure which prohibited dating or courting before marriage. The couple went against church procedure and dated for a year before getting married. The respondent did so because "*I didn't want to marry someone that I didn't know*" (R1WL22). This finding points to how respondents think independently and prioritize their individual preferences over the demands of any of the communities they form part of. This again reflects just how much Millennials will resist to surrender their independence and freedom.

4.6.3 Independence based on the concept of 'leaving and cleaving'

The Biblical concept of 'leaving and cleaving' based on Genesis 2:24 was understood by the respondents to mean becoming independent from one's family and "*forming a new family*" (R3WL426). This concept is understood to prescribe a neolocal family setting for new Christian families characterized by independence from the families they grew up in. This is strikingly different from the traditional African perspective that a new marriage contributes to the continuation of the family through the children that will be born in the marriage (Baloyi 2013b:168), not the formation of a new family. This is the reasoning behind the patrilocal family setting in traditional African society (de Haas 1984:313). Respondents also understood the concept of 'leaving and cleaving' to mean that "*my husband is more committed to me than he is to his parents*" (R5WL543). This understanding places the marital relationship above the relationship with parents, meaning the man's complete dedication is to his wife, putting her needs and their needs as a unit above all others, even his parents (Matthews 1996:223). Again, this understanding is different from the traditional African family system which prioritizes the patriarch or matriarch and the family's needs above anyone else's, including self (Van der Walt 1998:9).

In promoting independence, Christianity is understood to oppose the interdependence advocated by African culture. This suggests that the relationship between Christianity and African culture is that of the dialectic model. This means the Christian will prioritize their religious beliefs over the values and prescriptions of culture. Even though respondents indicated that the collectivism of African culture can co-exist with the individualistic nature of some Christian teachings – including this concept - their prioritization of their Christian faith over the demands of African culture points to the relationship between the two being of a dialectic nature.

4.6.4 Prioritization of faith over culture

The findings revealed that some respondents often had to choose between African traditional customs and Christian teaching. This was especially true for respondents who came from families that had a different belief system to them. In explaining the

difference in belief system between her and her parents, Respondent 3W explained that "*my parents are Christian but they also, they also do things traditionally*" (R3WL153). She indicated that, unlike her, her mother went to a Baptist church and her father read the Bible, but they also performed rituals for the ancestors. This finding reflects the variations among African Christians even within the missionary Christianity tradition which holds the view that Christianity is incompatible with African culture. It is evident that African Christians from historic mission churches (Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and Lutheran) struggle with dualism which is the practise of the African way of life while simultaneously adhering to Christian principles (Van der Merwe 2016:571). This dualism has always been characteristic of missionary Christianity converts:

> "On the one hand, they accepted the norms introduced by the missionaries who saw nothing valuable in African culture. On the other hand, the converts could not deny their own cultural identity. They could not substitute their denominational belonging for their cultural and religious heritage." Mugambi (2001:519)

Because mission churches do not significantly address the issues of spirituality, African Christians secretly revert to traditional healing practices when threatened by spiritual forces (Magezi 2016:5). This dualism has led to African theologians appealing for the Africanisation of Christianity which should revolve around an African theology which remains true to the essence of the Gospel message (Van der Merwe 2016:576. Even though the respondents displayed certain elements of this dualism in showing appreciation for some African communal values and in participating in cultural requirements (though modifying them), born-again Christians are careful to not go against Christian teaching in fulfilling these requirements. Born-again Christianity emphasizes belief in the infallibility of Scripture and stresses the centrality of a 'born-again' experience which is to experience personal salvation by dedicating one's life to Jesus Christ (Maxwell 2006:403, Lindhardt 2010:243). Born-again African Christians seem to make a distinction between cultural requirements and religious requirements when it comes to cultural practices and customs (Rudwick and Posel 2015:7). This is seen in how, in all proceedings of the African marriage process, the respondents were "*watchful*" (R4WL205) because they did not want to end up "*glorifying things that are not God*"

(R4WL205). This concern is based on the awareness of the involvement of ancestors in the marriage process since African marriage involves all members of the family, both living and dead (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:366). But African Christians are discouraged from any interaction with the dead (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:369), hence they are careful to avoid participating in rituals that will involve the ancestors.

Prioritization of Christianity over African culture is also evident in how the respondents chose not to participate in certain cultural practices which involved interaction with dead family members. One couple refused to participate in a gift-giving ceremony because "*they wanted to gift people who had already passed away*" (R6WL360). Another respondent openly addressed senior family members, informing them that "*I'm Christian and can't do certain things*" (R6HL65) when the family was insisting on the bride being reported to the ancestors. This finding points to how born-again Christians continue to hold to a dialectic approach to the relationship between Christianity and African culture. By refusing to obey the instructions of senior family members, this finding also reveals how respondents do not prioritize maintaining their position in the social hierarchy as would the traditional African. Instead, modern African Christians, in prioritizing their faith, will boldly express their views which are contrary to authority even if they are understood as being disrespectful (Haselau et al. 2015:177).

This finding also affirms that Millennial Africans align more with modern values which advocate for the individual's autonomy and freedom, resulting in young Africans challenging parental authority and cultural prescriptions (Knoetze 2017:19). As Onwurah (1982) concluded, today's African children insist on their choices, even if they go against their parent's advice (Onwurah 1982:53). This is especially significant for African Christians because of the Biblical commandment of obeying or honouring parents (Exodus 20:12). This behaviour of disregarding the parents' instruction if it contradicts Christian teaching is most likely based on the conservative understanding of verses like Act 5:29 where the Apostles claim that God must be obeyed rather than earthly authority. Through this we see how African

Christians who have traditional African parents are therefore faced with the complex balancing act of honouring both their parents and honouring God.

The prioritization of Christianity over African culture is a result of the weakness of the Christian missionary enterprise. Christian missionaries in Africa overlooked the fact that Christianity is not a denunciation of any culture, instead Christianity can be expressed and communicated through any culture (Mugambi 2002:516, Nwafor 2016:8). In their evangelization, missionaries only focused on acculturation which is a one-way flow of the culture of the missionaries to that of their African audience (Nwafor 2016:7). Instead, the missionaries should have focused on acquainting themselves with Africans and their culture and only then sieve out the non-essential elements in African cultural practices. This is inculturation – the "wholistic assumption of the positive values of a people as a starting point in mission where these values are united as one Christian value with neither losing its own identity" (Nwafor 2016:7). There is therefore a need for African Christianity to adopt a dialogic approach concerning the relationship between African culture and Christianity. The dialogic approach views African culture and Christianity as two compatible entities that could and should be reconciled, resulting in their mutual enrichment and efficiency (Ezeogu 1998:28). Through this approach, Christianity would be Africanized as much as African culture would be Christianized (Van der Merwe 2016:574), resulting in authentic Christian practice in Africa.

In summary, it is evident that the Christian community can interfere with the family's involvement in the marriage process by sharing in the family's advisory role as well as in discouraging family involvement because of interpreting it as a hinderance to the couple's independence. Christian marriage is understood to be neolocal through the biblical concept of 'leaving and cleaving'. A married couple is therefore understood as a new and independent family unit, contrary to the African view that new marriages are a continuation of the family and are therefore interdependent on the family. These findings reflect a dialectic approach between Christianity and African culture, which is further amplified by how the respondents chose to abandon cultural requirements in order to follow Christian prescriptions.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, the findings from Chapter 3 were reviewed and discussed against the arguments presented in Chapter 2. The discussion demonstrated a preference for a more Western and modern model of marriage and family life, marked by individualism and independence, instead of the traditional African marriage model which is based on the principle of collectivity and interdependence. The discussion also demonstrated that family involvement had a positive effect on the marital relationship of the respondents when it was minimal since it allowed for the couple's autonomy while excessive family involvement had a negative effect on the marital relationship because it undermines the couple's freedom and independence, resulting in friction in the relationship.

Unpredictably, the discussion also established how there is a preserved understanding and appreciation of the collective values of traditional communal society amongst young Africans. This demonstrates how modern Christian Africans are not simply abandoning their cultural views in their pursuit of a family system that best fits into their context. Instead, they are modifying certain elements of the cultural practices they deem irrelevant to their context, only avoiding those cultural practices which contradict their Christian values.

Finally, the discussion established that some values of Christianity interfere with and contradict traditional African values and practices. African Christian couples are seen to hold a dialectic approach to the relationship between Christianity and African culture, which is further amplified by how the respondents chose to abandon cultural requirements in order to follow Christian prescriptions.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This study has been an exploration of the views and experiences of modern African Christians concerning communalism. The study assumed a qualitative descriptive-interpretive approach and sought to gain an understanding of the influence of communalism on the marriages of young African Christians in urban South Africa.

In this section I seek to unpack the main conclusions we can draw from the findings of this study as well as recommendations for churches who associate with Evangelical confessions. The limitations of the study are also outlined and so are the aspects for further research.

5.2 Key findings from the study

The findings discussed in this study reflect a few interesting points concerning the influence of communalism in the marriages of modern African Christians in urban South Africa:

- **Finding 1:** Modern African Christian couples are more likely to prefer a nuclear family system which is characterized by independence and freedom. Due to this, the marital relationship of modern African Christian couples is more likely to be negatively affected by excessive family involvement because it undermines the couple's freedom and independence.

- **Finding 2:** Modern African Christian couples are more likely to have an accurate understanding of African communal concepts and customs, but they are more likely to modify cultural practices to integrate them with the modern worldview or with the Christian worldview.

- **Finding 3:** Modern African Christian couples are more likely to have a dialectic approach to the relationship between African culture and the gospel. Due to this, African Christians tend to abandon cultural requirements which directly contradict their Christian beliefs.

5.2.1 Contemporary African Christian marriage and the nuclear family system

This study demonstrated that modern African Christian couples prefer a nuclear family system. This finding can be understood as a result of not only the social status and urban environment that these couples exist within but also a result of the influence of the couple's Christian faith which promotes the independence of newly married couples from their families. The urban residences that young African Christians live within are characterized by a nuclear household structure which emphasizes the personal relationship between husband and wife (cf. Smith 2001:129, Ekane 2013:4). This emphasis on the marital relationship draws modern African Christians to view marriage as a personal agreement between two people on the basis of love instead of the traditional African understanding that marriage is a family affair aimed at the continuation of the family's name. This is why modern African Christians choose their own marriage partners.

The preference of the nuclear family structure can also be linked to the social status of contemporary African Christians who comprise the black middle-class. As educated professionals, modern African Christians are exposed to contemporary ideas about family and gender roles (cf. Mohlabane et. al. 2019:164). Education contributes to the rise of an egalitarian model of marriage that privileges individual choice and interpersonal emotions amongst contemporary African Christians (cf. Smith 2001:147). The nuclear family system is also suitable for Millennial Africans because Millennials place a high value on independence and freedom.

Modern African couples also structure their families according to the nuclear pattern because of their Christian beliefs. The Christian principle of 'leaving and cleaving' is understood by African Christians to mean that a new marriage is a new family unit which needs to exist independently from the rest of the family.

This study also demonstrated that because of the preference of a family model that prioritizes independence and freedom, modern African Christians perceived excessive family involvement to have a negative effect on their marital relationship.

Excessive family involvement undermines the couple's authority to make their own decisions (cf. Khathide 2011:117), causing frustration and conflict in the couple's relationship. African Christians appreciate their family's involvement only through advice because such an advisory role does not curtail their freedom as they can still decide whether to utilize the advice or not.

5.2.2 Modern African Christian marriage and African communal values and practices

This study demonstrated that modern African Christian couples have an accurate understanding of communal values and practices such as *ubuntu* and *ilobolo*. Communal values and practices are well-preserved in urban South Africa because such communal values were instilled in childhood for African Christians. African Christian couples also draw connections between *ubuntu* and the teachings of the Bible which is why these couples value *ubuntu* and lament its decline in modern society. This is mainly because young African couples believe that the family and community have an important role to play in the success of a marriage. Modern African Christian couples are therefore conflicted between the values of traditional communal society and the values of modern society – they find value in certain communal values, yet they also favor individualistic ways of living.

Contemporary African Christian couples participate in the practice of *ilobolo* strictly as a cultural requirement and not as a religious requirement. The couples are critical of how *ilobolo* is practiced in modern Africa where *ilobolo* is evidently commercialized. This commercial exploitation of *ilobolo* leads to the practice being a barrier, delaying marriage for young Africans because marriage has become very expensive. It also leads to the abuse of women in marriage because when *ilobolo* is commercialized, the practice is seen as a transaction, resulting in the bride being perceived as a purchased possession and therefore easily oppressed. Female African Christians are also critical of the patriarchal understanding of *ilobolo*. In its traditional patriarchal setting, *ilobolo* is viewed as the root of unequal gender relations in marriage because it subordinates women to men (cf. Makwanise and Masuku 2016:5, Sennott et. al. 2021:63). This view does not align with the

contemporary understandings of a woman's status in marriage and makes young female Africans question the relevancy of *ilobolo in* modern Africa.

African Christian couples therefore modify African cultural practices to integrate them with their modern lifestyle or with their Christian worldview. Due to the socio-economic impact of South Africa's history, young African Christian couples prioritize financial stability and modify cultural practices to not jeopardize their financial status. African Christian couples also modify African cultural practices so that they do not contradict their Christian beliefs, particularly the belief that interaction with the dead is adulterous.

This study demonstrated how African Christian couples with ties to rural communities experience a longer marriage process characterized by various cultural practices. This implies that African Christian couples who are originally from rural areas are more influenced by communalism that those who are originally from urban areas.

5.2.3 Contemporary African Christian marriage and the relationship between Christianity and African culture

This study demonstrated how African born-again Christians have a dialectic approach to the relationship between African culture and the gospel. A dialectic approach views Christianity and culture as opposed to each other, in perpetual conflict, irreconcilable and the dichotomy between the two only resolved through culture yielding to the demands of the Bible (cf. Ezeogu 1998:28). African born-again Christians observe this approach because they belong to independent denominations who hold Evangelical confessions. Evangelical confessions in Africa are a result of the Christian missionary enterprise which polarized Christianity and African culture by creating the perception that African culture was primitive, pagan, and heathen (cf. Mugambi 2002:518). African converts to Christianity were therefore demanded to reject African culture in order to become Christian. This is why even today; born-again African Christians prioritize their faith over African culture by choosing to not participate in cultural practices which disagree with their faith.

African Christian couples did not participate in cultural practices which involved interaction with dead family members because they understood ancestral veneration to be idolatrous and sinful (cf. Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:369).

Because Christian missionaries viewed the involvement of families in a marriage as a threat and hinderance to the freedom of the individuals getting married (cf. Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:366), Evangelical church teachings encourage young African Christians to be independent from their families. Such teachings are supported by the biblical concept of 'leaving and cleaving' which suggests that Christian marriage is neolocal and prioritizes the marital relationship over the family (cf. Matthews 1996:223). By emphasizing man's God-given right to choose for themselves, Christianity restricts the consent for marriage to the two people getting married (cf. Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1978:366). Through implementing these Christian teachings, African Christians end up living their lives contrary to the traditional African lifestyle.

5.3 Recommendations from findings

The following recommendations are neither conclusive or absolute, but are rather aimed at contributing to the discussion concerning African Christian Marriage in South Africa. The central interest of this study and its recommendations is to strengthen pastoral counselling in Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches in South Africa, equipping them to adequately support the marriage unions of African Christian members within them. This against the backdrop that black South Africans make up for the highest number of divorces compared to other population groups in the country (Statistics South Africa 2021:6).

I arrived at the following suggestions by looking and working through the themes that emerged through this study and were discussed in the previous chapters. Furthermore, I found supportive guidance from literature concerning Christianity in Africa and African Christian marriage.

5.3.1 Contextualization of Christianity: incorporation of communal values in church practice

This study has demonstrated that even though they hold a dialectic approach to the relationship between Christianity and African culture, African Christian couples draw similarities between some African communal values and Biblical concepts. African Christians understand *ubuntu* to be similar to the Biblical concept of 'loving your neighbor as yourself' while they understand the communal understanding of personhood to be similar to the Biblical account of man's creation as a social being. This finding shows how, for African Christians, certain African communal values can coexist with Christianity as compatible entities. This reveals how there is room for Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches to pursue efforts of contextualizing Christian teaching to co-exist with African communal values. The contextualization of Christianity in Africa focuses on the integration of positive aspects of the African cultural heritage into the Christian faith (Mokhoathi 2014:6).

The need for contextualizing Christianity, also termed as Africanizing Christianity, stems from the fact that the Christianity that came through the missionaries was identified with Western Culture in such a way that it made the gospel foreign to African culture. Christianity is, however, a 'non-cultural entity' which can only be expressed and communicated through cultural media (Mugambi 2002:516). This means any culture can be a medium for the expression and communication of Christianity. There therefore remains a need for an African theology that is biblically based and a relevant theology that speaks to the context and needs of the African people (Mokhoathi 2017:4). The contextualization of Christianity is necessary so that Africans can experience "Christ in their own context instead of being enslaved in a Christianity that is not their own" (Msomi 1992:12). Theological relevance is the focus of contextualization (Brunsdon 2017:116).

I must mention that there are those Christian theologians who consider the Africanization of Christianity to be a corruption of Christianity since they uphold that Christianity must remain Christocentric (Adamo 2011:16). According to these scholars, Christianity is universal and does not need to be qualified as "African" (Maluleke 2010:370) because as a universal religion, its Africanization may lead to

the lowering of the "universal standards" of Christianity (Maluleke 2010:372). This stance obviously ignores the fact that the widespread Christianity in Africa today is missionary Christianity which emerged as part of the cultural impact of the West on Africa (Bediako 1980:28). This stance dismisses the fact that the missionaries imposed Western culture through their evangelism and dismissed African culture as 'pagan' by determining conversion to Christianity through one's abandonment of African customs and the adoption of Western ones (Mugambi 2002:519, Vähäkangas 2004:55).

This study assumes the stance that authentic Christian practice in Africa is dependent on the integration of African values with Christian orientations since no one lives authentically outside of their nature (Nwafor 2016:1). Nwafor (2016) articulates it best when he states that "Christian religion is not anathema to any culture but, like the incarnate Saviour, it is willing to identify with all cultures in order to salvage its anomalies without itself losing its prime nature" (Nwafor 2016:8). This explains why Christianity is seen as changing throughout history - Christianity always exists within a cultural context. As Mugambi (2002) puts it, Christianity began within the Jewish culture and from there became greatly influenced by Greek philosophy (though not being swallowed by it). By the fourth century Christianity was the popular religion of the Roman Empire but by the times of the modern missionary enterprise, Western culture was the vehicle for Christianity (Mugambi 2002:517-518). Throughout these changes, it is the character of Christianity that experiences change, not its identity (Van der Merwe 2016:573). Christianity's identity is safeguarded by the core teachings of the Bible which is why an ecumenical church still exists despite the multiple variations or interpretations of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Van der Merwe 2016:573).

The contextualization of Christianity doesn't only affect the character of Christianity, but it also affects the culture it interacts with. Contextualization is therefore faithfully interpreting both the gospel and African culture (Van der Merwe 2016:573). Through contextualization it should therefore be expected and accepted that Christianity will change the character of African culture (Van der Merwe 2016:574).

Contextualization of Christianity therefore results in Christianity being Africanized as much as it results in African culture being Christianized.

> "The gospel can only be truly relevant to the African situation if it has to do with culture, and culture has to do with the total life of the person. The gospel is bound to transform religious presuppositions and so on. It will change the ideas of the person, who will remain an African, but the thinking of this person will be conformed to the image of Christ." Van der Merwe (2016:757)

In contextualizing Christianity in Africa, I recommend that the communal values of African society based on the concept of *ubuntu* be incorporated into Christian practice. I agree with Magezi and Khlopa (2021) that for *ubuntu* to be considered from a Christian point of view, it must shift from being based on blood and location to being based on "Christ's bond" (Magezi and Khopa 2021:3). This bond created by Christ transcends the community defined by blood relations and geographical location, binding all peoples of all nations (Magezi and Khlopa (2021:17). *Ubuntu* can therefore be incorporated into Christian practice globally by:

- Creating systems that will develop a collective mentality amongst church members which will allow them to pool their resources in order to assist those who are in need (cf. Poovan et al. 2006:18.) This is similar to the actions of the early church in Acts 4:34-35.
- Encouraging church members to share in one another's' struggles, sorrows and joy out of solidarity (cf. Msomi 1992:223, Banda 2019:210) and an understanding of inter-connectedness (cf. Van der Walt 1988:8, Mawere and Mubaya 2016:101). This means ensuring that church members attend funerals and weddings of other church members and that they check on one another when the other is sick. This kind of solidarity is reflective of the oneness of the body of Christ as taught in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and is the practice of bearing each other's burdens as Galatians 6:2 teaches. Oneness ensures that one's burdens are shared and addressed collectively through the community of believers (*kononia*) (Magezi and Khlopha 2021:23).
- Promoting selflessness among church members (cf. Poovan et al. 2006:18) which is consistent with Philippians 2:3-4.

- Teaching the church to be hospitable, opening up their homes to provide care to those in need (cf. Banda 2019:209). This concept is similar to what is taught by Romans 12:13. In the practical theological mindset, hospitality is connected to service (*diakonia*) (Magezi and Khlopa 2021:2)

- Encouraging church members to treat one another in a dignified way which upholds their human value as God's creation, created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*) (Magezi and Khlopa 2021:3).

- Creating programs that reach out to the needy, the sick and the prisoner as Jesus indicates are the acts of the righteous in Matthew 25:34-40.

5.3.2 Contextualization of pastoral care and counselling: incorporation of communal values in marriage procedures and programs

It has been established that an African pastoral care approach relies heavily on African concepts such as *ubuntu* (cf. Brunsdon 2017:121). This study has demonstrated that African Christian couples value *ubuntu* and consider family and community involvement an important element in ensuring the success of a marriage. Modern African Christians who participated in this study indicated that the community that was involved in their marriages went beyond their families to also include their church congregation, friends, mentors, and other couples. This community was said to provide counsel, support and assistance to the couples which positively influenced their marital relationship. This suggests that the family and community's involvement is a necessary element to consider for the success of the marriages of modern African Christians.

Based on this finding and other concepts discussed thus far, I recommend that the church in South Africa engage the communal value of family and community involvement in its marriage procedures and programs. This is consistent with Msomi's (1992) Christian communal pastoral care model. The church can do this through the following ways:

- Ensuring that the church marriage procedures accommodate the family's responsibility to give consent to the marriage. This means that the church

needs to allow young people to discuss their decision to marry with their families.

- Accommodating the advisory role played by the family in premarital counselling by not limiting it to just the two people getting married. As much as Nguni tribes have customs like *ukuyalwa* where the bride is given advice by older women concerning how she needs to conduct herself in marriage (cf. Makwanise and Masuku 2016:11), the custom is not wholistic since it is only the woman who is counseled. The church can incorporate the family into its premarital counselling program by allowing senior family members to attend some sessions. Here they would not only get to understand marriage from a Christian perspective, but they would participate by providing advice to the couple. This is not done to eliminate customs like *ukuyalwa*, but it allows both parties to be exposed to the advice their families have to share. This is especially significant for African Christians who come from unstructured families since this study established that participants from less structured families receive less advice from their families in comparison to their spouses who come from more stable, structured families.

- Incorporating indigenous African marital therapy by ensuring that the church marriage counselling program accommodates the family's commitment and responsibility towards the marriage. African families are responsible to mediate marital disputes (cf. Smith 2001:140, Makwanise and Masuku 2016:3, Mohlatlole et al. 2017:256). The church can ensure that it collaborates with the families in mediating when couples have disputes that might lead to divorce. One social work study has also recommended that family counsellors work with family members during marital counselling (Mohlatlole et al. 2017:269). This inclusion does not necessarily mean the family needs to form part of marriage counselling sessions conducted by the church, but it means encouraging and giving room to African Christians to formally seek counsel from their families too when facing difficulty. Khathide (2011) correctly states that the role of the family cannot be downplayed in any endeavor to solve African marital problems (Khathide 2011:114).

- Making use of group therapy by establishing groups for married couples within the church (cf. Msomi 1992, Magezi 2016). These groups will focus on addressing challenges faced by couples through discussions.

This list of suggestions is not exhaustive, but it provides ideas that the Church can use as a foundation to formulate more ideas.

5.4 Limitations of the study

Some limitations of this study are based on the research methodology selected for the study. For instance, the study only reviewed a relatively small sample of the total population of modern African Christians in South Africa. Because the outcome of the study was based on purposive sampling, the sample might not have been a representation of the total population. The study was limited because it took a perspective from Christians from Evangelical confessions therefore lacking diversity and representation of the broad field of confessions of Christianity in South Africa. The study was also limited due to the interviews being conducted virtually as in-person interviews could have produced richer data.

Senior family members could have been included in the study. Interviews with family members like parents could have given the study a richer dimension by incorporating their perspective.

Another limitation of this study is based on the literature consulted for this study. Pauli and Dijk (2016) note the scarcity of recent studies on marriage in South Africa since a majority of anthropological studies on marriage in Southern Africa were conducted before or during the 1980's (Pauli and Dijk 2016:257). This is also true of recent theological studies on marriage in Africa since there is a shortage of theological studies concerned with understanding the present-day context of African Christian marriage. It is for this reason that this study has made use of dated references.

5.5 Aspects for further research

This study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the influence of communalism on the marriages of African Christians. From this research study the

following aspects provide opportunities for further research regarding contemporary African Christian marriage in urban South Africa:

- This study was situated in a particular social context, namely urban middle class South Africans in two provinces, Gauteng and Mpumalanga. Research is needed in other urban settings, e.g., other provinces, particularly provinces with closer proximity to rural areas like Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal.

- The research participants were Christians from Evangelical, Pentecostal, or Charismatic independent denominations. Research is also needed with participants from other Christian confessions, e.g., Protestant denominations.

- This study made it evident that the family is not the only influence that has impact on the marriages of African Christian couples. Further research is needed to explore the influence of education, urban migration, economic pressures, gender equality and contemporary ideas about marriage and family on African Christian marriage.

- It is established that culture is not static, and it is evident that African culture is evolving because of cultural contact with modern culture. Further research is needed that will explore the biculturalism of contemporary African society and emphasize the need for African Christians to maintain their African identity as they engage with modern culture.

- Since African Christian couples are evidently conflicted between communal society and modern society, a richer study into the complexities of traditional African values and the values of modern society is necessary in order for the church to be equipped with assisting couples in processing this conflict.

5.6 Conclusion

Through this study, the influence of communalism on the marriages of modern African Christian was determined, therefore the research objective has been met.

Communalism is a value of African culture which permeates every aspect of life in African society. In marriage, communalism is best seen through the family's involvement in marriage, the social sanctions that govern marriage, and the communal society marriage exists within.

This research has shown that the marriages of modern African Christians are influenced differently by different communal values. Because marriage in communal society is an agreement between two families, families are actively involved in the marriages of African Christians. The marriages of modern African Christians were found to be negatively influenced by excessive family involvement. Exposed to modern systems of marriage and family in urban settings, African Christian couples prefer a nuclear family structure because of the independence and freedom it allows them. Having experienced the negative effects of their families' excessive involvement during the marriage process, African Christians restrict their families' involvement in their marriage, limiting them to the role of providing support and advice, which they value because of how it positively affects the marriage.

Because marriage in African society is governed by social sanctions, the respondents of this study had to participate in cultural practices like the payment of the bride-wealth. African Christian couples are critical of cultural practices that are not relevant to their context, they therefore modify cultural practices in an effort to either integrate them with their modern worldview or their Christian worldview.

The influence of communalism was positive when the research respondents described the communal society their marriages exist within. African Christian couples esteem the concept of *ubuntu* and lament its decline in urban society since it can ensure the success of marriages by providing support through the community.

Therefore, I conclude that African Christian couples are conflicted between communal society and modern society – they appreciate certain aspects of communal society, yet they also prefer individualistic ways of living. This creates a need for a deeper study to be conducted on this basis in order to empower churches in South Africa to assist couples with processing this conflict. African Christian couples are also making efforts to influence traditional communal customs in order to keep them relevant in modern society. This is a worthy task, ensuring that communalism and the good it does for marriage is preserved. I believe that this is a task that the church should actively participate in by contextualizing Christianity and pastoral care and counselling in South Africa.

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<h1 style="text-align:center">Appendix</h1>

Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

Dear Prospective Participants

My name is Gugu, and I'm a postgraduate student at the University of South Africa. I am conducting research on the impact of African communalism on modern African Christian couples in urban South Africa. While conducting this research, I am being supervised by Professor Marilyn Naidoo (contact no. 012 4294547). I would like to extend an invitation to you to participate in this meaningful study. But before you accept or reject my invitation, I'd like to give you an idea about what it entails.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is aimed at describing the lived experiences of African Christian couples in terms of communalism. The information gathered through this study will contribute to the knowledge of African Christian marriages, facilitating a better understanding of modern African Christian marriage for the purpose of pastoral care and counselling in a South African context.

Understanding the terminology

Communalism is a concept of ubuntu - the African social philosophy which views community as the essential aspect of personhood, expressed in the saying 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'. By 'African Communalism' we are referring to the kinship-oriented social order of African society.

Why are you being invited to participate in this study?

You have been identified to meet the criteria that this study requires. That is, you are a married black South African between the ages of 23 and 38, married for no longer than 9 years, are a practicing Christian* and reside in an urban area in either Mpumalanga or Gauteng.

* Your faith is very important to you and you've attended a church service within the past month

What is the nature of your participation in this study?

Once you agree to participate in the study, you and your spouse will be interviewed by me. I will travel to your location to conduct the interview. I will first interview you separately as individuals then together as a couple. The questions will be centred around your views and experiences of communalism. The interviews will take about 90 minutes. The interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes.

What are the risks of participating in this study?

There is no potential risk from taking part in this study, but where unforeseeable harm is endured, appropriate measures will be taken.

Can you withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?

Yes. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. But if you feel any reason that you would like to withdraw your participation, you are free to do so at any time without stating a reason.

What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?

The highest benefit is that you will be giving real and authentic information that will contribute to new knowledge about modern African Christian marriage.

Will your personal information be kept confidential?

Yes. No record of your personal information will be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to trace the answers you provide. In my records, you will only be referred to as 'respondent' and the number allocated to you.

How will the data be secured?

I will store a soft copy of this research for a period of five years in a secure password protected device. This duration is because the data provided by the study may be

published. Beyond this period, I will need the approval of the Research Ethics Review to use the data. After five years, the research data will be destroyed.

Will you be paid for participating in this study?

According to the UNISA policy 2.8, I am not allowed to offer incentives to participants and their participation is on purely voluntary terms.

Is this study approved by ethics committee?

Yes, this study has received written approval from the relevant body of UNISA. If you so wish, I can share it with you. In case of inquiry, you can contact research ethics chairperson of the Ethics Committee, Prof EL Kempen on 011-471-2241 or kempeel@unisa.ac.za

How can you access the final research findings?

You can contact me at 0782947021 or 57817235@mylife.unisa.ac.za once the study has been completed and I will gladly share the findings with you.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Regards,

Gugu Ndlovu

Appendix B

Consent form

<div style="background-color:#8DC63F; padding:20px;">

📄 **Research Participation Consent Form**

</div>

I, _____ (participant 1 name) and_____ (participant 2 name) confirm that the researcher, Gugulethu Ndlovu, has explained everything with regards to the research concept. We have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and are prepared to participate in the study. We understand our voluntary participation and freedom to withdraw. We are aware that findings of this research may be published but our personal information is secure. We agree to the recording of the interview. We have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant 1

Participant name	Date	Signature	Role

Researcher name	Date	Signature

Participant 2

Participant name	Date	Signature	Role

Researcher name	Date	Signature

Please complete the following section to confirm that you are eligible to participate in this research study.

How long have you been married? _____

Participant 1

How old are you? _____

Are you a black South African? _____

Where do you live? _____

Which church do you attend? _____

When last did you attend a worship service? _____

Participant 2

How old are you? _____

Are you a black South African? _____

Where do you live? _____

Which church do you attend? _____

When last did you attend a worship service? _____

Appendix C

Code list (summary)

Code	R 1	R 2	R 3	R 4	R 5	R 6	Total
advice	10	16	5	10	1	3	45
ancestral worship	0	0	0	1	0	4	5
assistance	2	1	2	1	2	3	11
boundary-crossing	1	0	0	0	0	6	7
check-ups	1	0	3	1	3	2	10
Christian	2	4	2	2	4	2	16
church more involved than family	4	0	1	0	1	0	6
church procedure	11	0	0	0	1	0	12
community	1	1	2	0	5	1	10
concern	2	2	1	1	3	3	12
control	1	0	3	4	8	1	17
deceased parent	2	0	0	3	1	1	7
demands	0	4	1	0	1	1	7
family backgrounds	1	0	5	0	3	4	13
difficulty in marriage	4	0	0	0	0	4	8
disagreement	1	1	9	1	2	6	20
not abandonment	1	0	2	3	1	0	7
exploited	1	0	0	1	0	6	8
facilitated ilobolo	0	0	2	1	4	2	9
family background	1	0	5	0	3	4	13
family formation	2	0	3	0	0	2	7
financial assistance	2	4	1	2	2	5	16
freedom	3	0	8	2	5	4	22
guidance	0	1	1	1	7	0	10
hierarchy	0	0	2	1	4	0	7
independence	6	4	3	10	7	6	36
interconnectedness	4	5	8	10	9	3	39

irrelevant	3	0	0	4	0	1	8
limiting involvement	5	0	1	3	0	4	13
marriage needs other people	3	1	0	0	3	1	8
mediate	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
newness	2	2	2	0	0	3	9
no contradiction	2	2	3	4	1	3	15
no control over wedding	8	2	0	0	0	3	13
no disadvantage of involvement	1	1	1	0	5	1	9
no influence	5	8	2	3	6	3	27
no pressure	0	2	3	0	1	1	7
not a transaction	0	0	5	2	1	0	8
not involved	2	4	1	1	3	1	12
personal desires not considered	2	2	0	3	0	0	7
pleasing parents	1	3	2	0	0	0	6
positive effect of involvement	7	8	2	3	4	2	26
in-laws	2	0	4	0	0	2	8
relationship	2	2	1	4	10	6	25
respect	0	3	0	4	5	3	15
responsibility	2	4	0	1	2	1	10
sensitivity to boundaries	1	0	3	0	0	7	11
support	6	2	7	8	4	11	38
teachings	1	2	2	1	3	0	9
understanding	0	1	8	1	0	1	11
valuing ilobolo	0	2	4	1	4	3	14
very involved	4	3	1	3	0	2	13
wedding planning	2	5	0	0	1	1	9

Transcribed Interviews

Appendix D

Interview transcript of Respondent 1 where R1W is the wife and R1H is the husband.

Individual questions: R1W

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

1 **R1W:** They weren't involved. I think they were involved in the planning of the
2 wedding, but the process of us deciding to get married or even after we got
3 engaged, they were not that involved. I think that's another thing my husband and I
4 talk about because here, as you know we got married in our former church and they
5 encourage you to keep it quiet and not to talk to people about it, so not a lot of
6 people were involved, actually, even in our families.

Int: So you mentioned that they were only involved in the wedding planning. Can you maybe give an example of how they were involved?

7 **R1W:** (laughs) I think the only thing that my husband and I chose when it came to
8 the wedding I think for me was just the colors and the flowers. In terms of venue, in
9 terms of who's coming, it was all our parents. To the point that, I think if I'm not
10 mistaken, I only had one friend there and I think my husband also had two or three
11 of his friends there. When I say friends I mean people I was doing life with at that
12 time. So not a lot of them could come because the numbers were so high from
13 people belonging to our parents.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's involvement in your marriage process which is the planning of the wedding in your case?

14 **R1W:** I think the only disadvantage is that we didn't get the kind of wedding we
15 always spoke of – the kind of atmosphere we wanted at our wedding. I think that's
16 the only disadvantage. There was no advantage. Maybe in terms of our parents
17 thinking that they were doing what is best for us. I think it made them happy. So I

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18   think in terms of a positive thing, I think that's the only positive thing. But in terms of

19   me and my husband, we didn't get the type of wedding that we had always wanted.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

20   **R1W:** No, not at all. Because if I can say, you know that we went to the same church.

21   My husband and I started speaking after my mom passed away because what I

22   decided for myself was that I didn't want to marry someone that I didn't know. That

23   was my first thing, and my second thing was that I didn't want to marry someone

24   that didn't know my family well. So in spite of the fact that at church we were not

25   allowed to date, my husband and I decided that because this is how I feel and he

26   felt a similar way, we decided that we were going to date. I think we dated for a year

27   before we got married so there was no influence whatsoever from our families. The

28   decision to get married came completely from us.

Int: What was your parent's involvement, influence or comment in terms of who you
chose to marry?

29   **R1W:** When I got married my mom had already passed away so the only person I

30   was speaking to was my dad and of course when I first told him, he didn't approve.

31   At all. Before I got married, I had had 5 or 6 other proposals and I had agreed with

32   my parents to decline them because, as I told you, they came via them, people

33   speaking to them and for me I was very uncomfortable with that church process of

34   them having to go to the pastors. As much as it is fine because it works for them,

35   but for me it was very uncomfortable that is why I declined. So when I said I wanted

36   to get married to my husband, my dad's first reaction was that no, he didn't approve.

Int: How did you get past that?

37   **R1W:** I don't think we got past it but I married him anyway (laughs). When I insisted

38   that this is the person I want to marry, he finally said 'well if that's what you want,

39   then it's fine, but if it were up to me I wouldn't say you should marry him.' His biggest

40   concern was our age difference because my husband is 3 years younger than me.

41   That was his big reason and I said if that's the only reason I don't think for me it isn't

42   because we spoke intensively with my husband about this and it's not a thing for

43   him and it's not a thing for me. And that was that.

Int: At present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

44 **R1W:** In terms of their involvement in our marriage, we really had to learn because
45 at the beginning our parents were very involved. Through that we had to learn to
46 limit their involvement in our marriage. So as things stand today, our parents are
47 not involved in our marriage. We filter the information that we give to them and we
48 try to give information to both my parents and his parents together so that they get
49 the same information. They receive what we give them, they don't come in and take
50 over. At first we failed at this very much because both our parents were very
51 involved in our relationship.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your family's current involvement in your marriage?

52 **R1W:** In terms of advantages, I mean now, it's sort of an advisory role that they
53 play, which is very good. Because when you're one person, you don't know
54 everything, and it's the same in marriage – we don't know everything. So every time
55 when we get stuck, it's nice to be able to go to them and ask for their advice. It's an
56 advisory role. The disadvantage is that parents overreach and so you have to sort
57 of smack their hand so that they can take it away. Because I think parents – if you
58 let them – they still want to run your lives like you are still under them, which is a
59 disadvantage because we both come from very very different backgrounds and
60 different styles of being raised and they don't gel. So it doesn't work, well for us it
61 didn't work for our parents to be involved.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

62 **R1W:** When they were involved in the beginning like I said, it was an all-round
63 negative effect on our marriage. That was not nice. But the way they are involved
64 now, which I said is an advisory role, has a lot of positive things because we're
65 learning from them and there's a lot of advice in terms of the decisions we're making.
66 And the nice thing about giving someone advice is that they can take the advice or
67 not take it. So we're at the stage where they give us advice and we look at where
68 we are and we use it or don't use it and there's no hard feelings there.

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from the initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

69 **R1H:** For me personally, this question has two meanings. Because my parents only
70 knew…because I was at church and at the entire process was at church until they
71 said now I can tell my parents. Even me involving them wasn't a spontaneous thing,
72 it was an advice from the pastors that now I could tell them. So I followed that. So it
73 was not so simple. And their involvement was between the two. In the planning of
74 the wedding ceremony, they were very involved. To the point that they had more
75 people than myself (laughs). My mother said she would give allowance to invite five
76 people to my own wedding (laughs) because that's the only space. So they were
77 very involved, and they carried the costs also. My parents did everything. I only
78 bought my clothes, they did everything.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's involvement in your marriage process, in this case the planning of the wedding?

79 **R1H:** (hesitant) I'm sorry, my mind is between the two and maybe later we will speak
80 about that. Because my response, if you had asked me these things then, it would
81 be completely different because of what I've learned and what I know now. For me,
82 my parents' involvement was very good in terms of helping, they took away the
83 financial element even though I was ready and had planned. That was helpful. But
84 in the things that matter, they were not involved and of course I can't blame them
85 because the way in which things were done is what exclude them. So it wasn't their
86 fault because they didn't know. When they knew I think it was late because at that
87 point I had already spoken to my wife. Whatever they were saying at that point, I
88 think there were a lot of things in my mind. I think they should have been involved
89 sooner. I felt that them being involved at that time disadvantaged them to be able
90 to speak, to help me and so forth.

Int: You've already pointed out a few disadvantages of their involvement in the wedding planning, like them being in charge of the guest list. What else would you say was a disadvantage of their involvement?

R1H: Not really. The thing is now, when I look at my…me and my wife are looking at what we're going to do for our tenth year and that makes me realize that (hesitation) the church took away stuff which I think should have been done by myself and when they came in they also took stuff so the wedding was like…it didn't matter what I wanted. Maybe it was because I lacked imagination and agreed with whatever they decided. But now I feel that as much as their son getting married is something exciting, it should be something that speaks to me more than them because this is my thing. So at the end of the day they did it like any other parental thing like putting me in school but this was supposed to be different, I feel I should have had input. I hear your question but can't answer it as you ask it because there were so many things that were different in my case. When I involved them they did good but I do wish that they sat me down and asked me 'what do you wish? What do you want us to do?' and not just assume that this is how things are done and just do it they way they think.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

R1H: Not at all. My parents were shocked when I told them that I'm getting married (laughs). They were not expecting that at all.

Int: What was your parent's involvement or influence in terms of who you chose to marry?

R1H: The same. If the church would have included them…when I told the pastor that I want to get married and advices I pray and so forth but also include them I think then I would have answered your question because I think then I would have gotten a reaction from them. But they only found out on the other side when I'd finalised, after having spoken to my wife So I think only telling them at that point takes away their power to participate n the decision. So they just supported what I gave them because I feel like I didn't give them an option unlike the pastors who knew before things were official. Of course me and my wife were friends by then but I feel like I took away from them the ability to participate in that regard. I felt like if they didn't approve of my wife at that point, it would become a big deal because I had already told her and the pastors. They supported me but I don't think it was a fair…For these reasons, they couldn't influence. But their response was accepting

119   because they knew the girl and her parents. They also asked if I was ready, but in
120   terms of the person, they didn't object.

Int: At present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

121   **R1H:** What exactly do you mean by involved?

Int: How much are they a part of your lives? Are they on the side-lines or are they part of your everyday lives?

122   **R1H:** They are involved. We tell them about our challenges and they help us. They
123   are very involved. They call on us and check on us, they counsel us. Just like how
124   your parents are there for you when you're single, mine have continued to be that
125   to me. They never stopped parenting me, it's just that now they are parenting a
126   family. They are not involved to the degree of making decisions for us, they just
127   support us in the direction we want to go. They help us when we shout for help, they
128   don't give us direction like dictating when we should have children.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families current involvement in your marriage?

129   **R1H:** Well, let me just explain all my answering speaks to my parents, I'm not
130   speaking to my wife's family. I really don't see any disadvantages because they are
131   only involved as I allow them. They don't barge in and intrude at all. But they are
132   supportive, even in my failures. They don't take my side when there are differences
133   between me and my wife, they remain objective and their counsel is always
134   constructive. In the last five years where things were really difficult for us, they did
135   very well. I think the disadvantage would maybe be me not positioning them well.
136   But they give us privacy and are present when we need their help. But that's only
137   my parents who do that.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

138   **R1H:** For me this is a very broad question because…(stutters) At the end of the
139   day, it has been positive because everyone who gets married goes through difficulty
140   and wants to give up on marriage because Satan is against marriage. The positive

194

141 effect of my parent's involvement is not on a daily involvement, that would have to
142 be accounted to my current pastors who we go to for all kinds of things for marriage.
143 In that sense my marriage is nourished and get practical lessons. From my
144 parents…when I was tempted to get out of the marriage early in the marriage, they
145 didn't fuel that but encouraged me to have hope to not give up. Sometimes their
146 advice wasn't easy to accept because it wasn't practical because they wouldn't say
147 how to solve my problems but it was useful because it kept me trying to make my
148 marriage work.

Joint questions

Int: Which cultural acts/ceremonies did you have to perform as part of the marriage process (e.g. payment of ilobolo)?

149 **R1W:** It was just the lobolo

Int: What is your understanding of ilobolo? What does it mean?

150 **R1W:** It's when two people have decided they're going to get married and they guy
151 gives ilobolo to the girl's family. Nowadays it's money that the guy gives to the girl's
152 parents as "gratitude".

153 **R1H:** I'd say it's a vehicle for African people to facilitate the process of getting
154 married. It stems from the African tradition or religion. There was no home affairs.
155 They used ilobolo to facilitate

156 **R1W:** and validate the marriage.

157 **R1H:** they used this ceremony to acknowledge that someone was now a wife
158 because there wasn't another process.

Int: What are your views about this ilobolo?

159 **R1W:** I think in the Christian context the way it is being done now, it is completely
160 irrelevant to the culture we live in now. There's an element of it being exploited. I
161 think it would have been relevant if the concept of ilobolo was further developed to
162 fit into the culture we now live in. When you look at the reasons why it came into
163 existence, back then, it made sense to pay it. Because the major issue was for it to

164 help the couple to start of their new home. But in our context, it's irrelevant, unless
165 it can be further developed.

166 **R1H:** I feel ilobolo…because people are different by lifestyle, ilobolo speaks
167 differently to different people. For me it's irrelevant as my wife said, but that doesn't
168 mean it's irrelevant for everyone. When you don't define ilobolo the same way the
169 practice becomes problematic. The definition

170 **R1W:** and expectation

171 **R1H:** for those in rural areas is different to us in urban areas when it comes to
172 ilobolo. Expectations go unfulfilled. For us it's unnecessary and speaks nothing to
173 us.

Int: Were these the views the same views you held when you got married?

174 **R1W:** This was not our opinion when we got married and that's where the problem
175 came because we had two different definitions and expectations about ilobolo, and
176 neither of our expectations were met, causing frustration. So we sat down and
177 looked at what it means and what it means for us as Christians and what it means
178 for people living in this time.

179 **R1H:** I defined ilobolo on the basis of my parent's marriage who weren't married
180 legally for years but only customarily. My rural background influenced my
181 expectations. But it doesn't speak to our marriage now.

Int: What is your understanding of the phrase 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'?

182 **R1W:** For me, it speaks to community and people you do life with. Humans were
183 never created to be alone. Relationships are one of the most essential things about
184 God.

185 **R1H:** It's an African thing but I think it applies everywhere. You need people to win
186 in life. It's one of my values, I value people because they are a great asset. Even in
187 our church, we're big on people and relationships and fellowship. You need people
188 to get to where you are destined to go, even people who seem like they have little
189 to offer you, you gain a lot from them when you value them.

Int: What would you say this phrase means for marriage?

190 **R1H:** You can't do marriage without people. You need to be accountable to
191 someone. We can't be accountable to ourselves as a couple but need to be
192 accountable to other people. You need someone to ask you difficult questions and
193 hold you accountable, to challenge your behaviour. We've been without that and it's
194 bad. It's detrimental when you have no one to check up on you as a couple. It's not
195 just pastors, but you need this from friends.

196 **R1W:** It's the same for me. It's speaks about people's who's opinion you value and
197 help each other along on the journey of marriage. Because no one is so awesome
198 that they can do marriage on their own.

Int: What would you say is the role of family/parents in a marriage?

199 **R1H:** I think for me this is an area which the issue of ilobolo also negatively affects
200 by setting a different standard, with expectations that are outside of me just being a
201 son. Parents should just remain, and not this 'in-law' stigma which create a burden
202 of rituals you have to uphold.

203 **R1W:** I think the same. As much as the parenting relationship evolves at the
204 different stages of a child's life, and surely evolves when you get married, I think
205 parents should remain parents in that they should be the biggest support, the
206 biggest advisers. Because we've learnt that when you get married, you need all the
207 support you can get. It's a good thing for parents to support the marriage.

Int: Genesis 2:24 says 'The man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his
wife…' what is your understanding of this verse?

208 **R1W:** It speaks to responsibility and it's God acknowledging that a marriage is a
209 new relationship or family that is being formed.

210 **R1H:** It's a lifecycle thing. You are moving away from the family that you were raised
211 under in order to build your own family. You move away from under your parents
212 care so that you too can eventually become a parent.

Int: In your view, does this verse contradict or agree with what the concept of ubuntu
means when it comes to marriage?

213 **R1W:** I don't think there's a contradiction between the two, I mean when you
214 understand God's mind about relationships and marriage it becomes obvious. This

215　verse doesn't mean you no longer consider your parents as though they were dead
216　to you. It just means that something new has come about, like a cell dividing. And
217　parents also need to acknowledge this and give this new thing room to flourish. And
218　at the same time, to grow and flourish it still needs a connection with the parents,
219　but with boundaries and limitations in place.

220　**R1H:** African tradition or culture has no silos, but in all honesty everyone is moving
221　away from that African tradition in our day to day life. We're all drawn to the benefits
222　of the Western culture, nobody truly lives out African culture in all its truth. This is
223　because African culture stopped developing. The concept of ubuntu is good but bad
224　when it doesn't develop. It becomes a lie that nobody actually lives up to. So for me
225　there's also no contradiction depending on how you define things. African culture
226　doesn't become wrong it just becomes irrelevant when not developed to suit the
227　times.

Appendix E

Interview transcript of Respondent 2 where R2W is the wife and R2H is the husband.

<u>Individual questions: R2W</u>

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

1 **R2W:** They were involved a lot more than I expected. At some point I felt that some
2 of the things that we had to do were things that they actually wanted us to do and
3 not things that we wanted. Obviously certain things we had to do them just to make
4 them happy as our parents because that's the expectation from them. I knew the
5 expectation they had for the day I get married from the whole celebration and
6 *amalobolo* and everything else. But I didn't know that they'd be too involved to such
7 a point that for certain things they decided for me on my behalf, one of which was
8 the celebration that we had. I wanted something small with less people and I wanted
9 to spend as little as possible, but that was not possible because that's not the idea
10 that they had in mind. They wanted a big celebration, they wanted to show off and
11 everything. They wanted to go all out. And that for me made me feel like they were
12 too involved, more than I expected that they'd be involved.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's involvement in your marriage process?

13 **R2W:** I'll start with the advantages. The advantages were that, uhm, financially and
14 when it comes to the stress of planning the whole thing. They were helpful in that.
15 They took so many responsibilities from as parents and did them themselves. For
16 me that was an advantage that they were involved in terms of the planning and
17 everything else. Well the disadvantage was me compromising things that I wanted
18 to accommodate them. I felt that was a disadvantage but the advantage was also
19 to get advice from them because it wasn't the first time they married off their
20 children. So the advice in terms of what to expect, and how to plan for things in case
21 things don't go the way we had initially planned. What it is that we can do to be able
22 to accommodate if something happens that we did not plan. That we be able to have

23 a plan B – how to sort out that thing. For me that was an advantage in them being
24 involved.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

25 R2W: Not at all. There was never a point in my life where I felt that they were
26 encouraging it. In fact I felt that they wanted me to stay at home for the longest time.
27 (laughs) If it was up to them, I shouldn't have accepted the proposal. So there wasn't
28 any pressure from my parents, even from my siblings as well, they just wanted me
29 to enjoy being alone, being single and being at home with my parents, receiving all
30 the attention that I was getting. So there was never any influence from my parents
31 to get married. It was just a solely decision that I took on my own and it was
32 something that I wanted and felt that I'm ready for at that point in time. And I felt that
33 everything that I wanted to accomplish in my years of being a single person or being
34 a child, everything that I wanted to explore - a majority of those things I felt I had
35 explored and felt I was ready for that. I'm ready to move on to the next step of my
36 life and I'm ready to have someone in my life. So it was solely a decision I took on
37 my own. There was literally no influence from my parents or my siblings or any of
38 my aunts or extended family- nothing.

Int: What was your parent's involvement or influence in terms of who you chose to
marry?

39 R2W: No, I wouldn't say they were directly involved in influencing me in terms of
40 who I marry because they only found out after I actually made my decision of whom
41 I'd marry. But their response after I told them, my mother was happy about my
42 decision, she didn't even question it. A person who was a bit sceptical about the
43 whole thing, mainly because he didn't know my husband that much – my dad was
44 the person who was asking me 'what kind of person is he?' 'Are you sure about it?'
45 'It doesn't mean that when his parents are okay that he is also okay' 'No you must
46 look at such things – take your time. So it was those kind of questions and those
47 kind of doubts from my dad but they didn't influence my decision to get married. For
48 me it was completely a decision that I took on my own as to who I was going to
49 marry and I think that is why I told them after I had made the decision that 'okay I'm
50 going to do it 'this is who I'm going to marry'. Obviously their response was important
51 for me because I mean I needed their blessing and I needed to feel and see that

52 they approve of the person that I chose. That for me would give me a sort of like
53 peace of mind and sort of a blessing for me that they approve of the person that I
54 chose to live with for the rest of my life. So I think that for my dad it was just those
55 questions, but once they spoke with my mother and he was able to see certain
56 things like when days went by he was able to ask certain questions about the person
57 that I'm getting married to. I think so many things were answered after the ilobolo
58 process began. Only then was he settled that 'I'm comfortable, I release you'. So it
59 happened that way. They didn't influence the person by asking 'do you pick this
60 one? Or don't pick this one'. No they didn't influence that decision.

Int: After you got married and at present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

61 **R2W:** Okay, after we got married, um, they were not that involved. I think they had
62 taken a decision that they're going to take a step back and let us figure things out.
63 Especially in terms of our living arrangements. They only started getting involved in
64 that now because we had issues about that so they only started getting involved in
65 terms of our living arrangements now. But at first they were not that much involved
66 in how we do things, how our marriage is and everything else. The other thing I feel
67 my family is just too involved in, I don't know, I guess my dad is just a traditional
68 man (laughs) he believes that you don't get married without a reason to have a child.
69 So he's been asking 'when are you guys…?' (laughs) My dad has been long
70 awaiting a grandchild, so ja. He's been making these weird comments about a
71 grandchild and everything. And for me I feel it's another pressure that I don't need
72 right now in my life because we had decided when that time will come for us but
73 having that pressure coming from my family all the time…they also say it even in
74 front of him when we're together at home. So I feel like that's the part of their
75 involvement in our marriage that I don't like. And then, in terms of our living
76 arrangement, well they don't approve of it that early in our marriage we spend most
77 of our time apart, we only meet on weekends. Mainly it's because of work, but they
78 feel as if it's going to affect our marriage because at the beginning we're supposed
79 to bond and be together, spend time together get to know each other better, plan
80 our way forward. But I think so far things are not as bad as they thought it would be.
81 It's not the way they want things to be and it's not the way we want things to be but
82 it's not as bad as we thought it would be. So that for me, their involvement I saw it

83   there mostly, but in terms of other things like our finances and where we spend our
84   time and everything else they don't get involved.

Int: Since you mentioned it, how do you deal with those comments from your family about having children?

85   R2W: Well, I have explained to him that we're actually not planning on having a
86   child now. And mainly our reason is that we don't want to have a child while living
87   in rented apartments so we want to find a home for that child. That's what we both
88   decided on that's what we want for our child. So as long as we're still renting, we're
89   not gonna have a child. So I explained that to him but he felt that it's not a reason
90   'we raised you in rentals and you turned out fine'. So for my dad, he'll never
91   understand things the way I see them. I've just accepted it (nervous laughter).

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families current involvement in your marriage?

92   R2W: I think the advantage is us learning from their experiences, especially from
93   my parents because they lived apart for a very long time even my husband's parents
94   have lived apart for a very long time. So they're actually warning us about something
95   that they've experienced and it's something that might have impacted their
96   marriages negatively hence they advise against it that we be apart for such a long
97   time. So I think the advantage is to actually get advice from people who've been
98   through it and for them to make suggestions that 'okay if things aren't working out,
99   but it shouldn't be a long term period thing, maybe find an alternative way like this…'
100   how they advice us. For me I feel like their involvement in terms of our living
101   arrangement in that area its more beneficial to us because we are able now to take
102   not of the small things that we actually wouldn't have noticed had they not talked to
103   us about living apart. So that makes us aware that each time we come together we
104   have to be intentional and make an effort to make our marriage work. To actually
105   care for one another and being intentional in wanting to know what you are thinking
106   about, what is it that you want to do, what is it that you want to pursue. So everything
107   that we do when we come together we ensure that we make the best of the little
108   time that we have together because we understand that to bond is important in a
109   marriage, especially in the foundation of a young marriage. So for me that's the
110   advantage. And then the disadvantage is people making demands saying 'this is

111　what we want and this is what we want' without understanding your current position

112　in your marriage. And for me it might not necessarily be about finances only, like we

113　both don't know whether we can have children or not so I don't want that kind of

114　pressure on me 'you have to have kids, you have to have kids' because what if it

115　happens that we can't have kids. Then it's going to cause a wound in my life. I don't

116　want that. I don't want to be nursing myself emotionally about such issues (sombre

117　look) so for me I feel it's best for them not to get too involved. For me that's the

118　disadvantage, especially when it comes to that area, but everything else for me I

119　feel is an advantage in terms of how they advise us on how to treat one another,

120　how to be open with one another, and transparent with one another. And I think also

121　the one thing that my mother told me that I must learn to…not really accept, but

122　learn to support and help the next person like in whatever weaknesses that they

123　have and learnt to love them through that because if I'm transparent I'm able to

124　accept them and accept their weaknesses. Then I'm able to love them easier than

125　when I'm expecting them to be perfect, that he should know how things should be

126　done and what shouldn't be done. I've learnt that you accept a person the way they

127　are and that where you help them with their weaknesses where you can, you strive

128　to make the other person better, you don't leave things lying to sort themselves out.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

129　**R2W:** Well for me I feel it has really benefited our relationship in a positive way.

130　Because we've learnt to appreciate each other the way we are, and we've learnt to

131　try and make things better like to planning in advance. We've also tried to be

132　intentional about spending time together. So for me their involvement has been a

133　positive contribution to our marriage. How we treat each other, how we support each

134　other, how we're there for one another and mostly it positively contributed in our live

135　in our faith. How they've made us understand that 'prayer is foundational in your

136　marriage, we might give you all the advice in the world' but I think the best advice

137　they gave us is to always pray about things and to always know that there's nothing

138　God can't sort out because there is a point where you feel that we're stuck and don't

139　know whether to go forward or backward, that's where you should actually be able

140　to pray. It's not that you have to run to you parents with everything to sort out your

141　problems. So I feel that their involvement, their advice, all the conversations we've

142 had have positively affected our marriage and has just made things easier for us.

143 Because honestly I am enjoying my marriage a lot, and I see that it's things that

144 they've spoken over me, things that they've advised us to be careful of. Blindly we

145 could have fallen into those things had we not had those conversations with them

146 because we've never been married before, this is the first time we both got married

147 so it's our first experience for both of us. But at the end of the day it doesn't mean

148 that the things they passed through we should also go through. So I feel that we're

149 sort of put in a nest in these first few months of our marriage. We are nested in and

150 protected.

Individual questions: R2H

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

151 **R2H:** My parents gave me advice about marriage when I told them I wanted to get

152 married. They first asked me who I want to get married to and all those things. Then

153 they gave me advice about how to behave in marriage, how it's like to be married.

154 They gave me advice, that's the first thing they did. During the marriage process

155 they helped me with arrangements of certain things like the venue, my sisters found

156 the venue so that's where my family helped. They helped me find a venue because

157 we were still looking for it. My mother also wanted to help financially so she helped

158 me buy a ring from my wife. We travelled to another province with her to purchase

159 the rings. So we were able to get rings because of her. Uhm, for me that was it.

160 Those are the only things they did for me. The wedding planning was done on my

161 wife's side of the family. Even the decoration was done by my wife's sister. My family

162 was just there for me, they supported me, they didn't do any physical work like

163 helping with moving.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's involvement in your marriage process?

164 **R2H:** I think because family is important, mostly they advised me. I think the

165 advantage is having people who are there to tell you what to do when you're stuck.

166 Maybe you don't know what to do, maybe there's something – an obstacle. They

167   were there to guide me as to how to deal with the whole wedding arrangements.

168   Whenever there was something that wasn't going well, they helped me with advice.

169   That's the advantage. The disadvantage, what can I say, uhm, I'm trying to think.

170   There's none. I can't think of anything right now. There's no disadvantage.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

171   **R2H:** Uhm no, like from when we were growing up they've always told us that you

172   should pray, pray, pray, that's the only thing. That's the only pressure, they used to

173   pressure us to pray about getting married. That's the only thing, but the actual

174   decision itself that I want to get married, no they didn't pressure me – only the

175   praying side.

Int: What was your parent's involvement or influence in terms of who you chose to marry?

176   **R2H:** They only told, they only advised me that I should choose a Christian person.

177   That's the only thing they said to me – a born again Christian. That's the only thing

178   they said to me. As to who…They only told me that they wouldn't be able to accept

179   a non-Christian person. They only pressurized us to get married to Christian people.

180   People of the same kind.

Int: When you told them that this is who you chose to get married to, how did they respond?

181   **R2H:** They were very happy. I remember that we were at a restaurant. They were

182   very happy, they were very excited.

Int: At present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

183   **R2H:** So far, the only thing they say is just for us to pray for the marriage more than

184   any other thing. Everyday, pray for your marriage, pray for your marriage. That's the

185   only thing they say. They aren't involved in anything so far.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families current involvement in your marriage?

186   **R2H:** Well there's only advantages of prayer cause its helping, prayer helps. I do

187   pray for my marriage, but there hasn't been anything that makes me pray like I'm in

188 trouble. Things are smooth. Let's just say prayer makes it smooth and that's the
189 advantage.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

190 **R2H:** It's been good. I think you need parents to be there in your marriage. It's been
191 good.

Joint questions

Int: Which cultural acts/ceremonies did you have to perform as part of the marriage process (e.g. payment of ilobolo)?

192 **R2W:** The only thing that I can think of is ilobolo that we did. That's the only thing.
193 We didn't do any other cultural thing. It was just the lobolo negotiations.

Int: What is your understanding of ilobolo? What does it mean?

194 **R2H:** I was just following what I was told, otherwise I wouldn't have... Honestly.
195 They only tell us that is something that is mandatory to be done before marriage,
196 but I don't even understand why we have to do it and what it is.

197 **R2W:** For me, my understanding that I have about it, especially from the explanation
198 I got from my dad, that ilobolo is a way of showing respect to the girls family,
199 especially coming from the guy himself. When he comes to ask permission from
200 your dad himself, it means that he respects him and doesn't want to take his
201 daughter without his permission. Ilobolo is also a way of formally introducing and
202 bringing together families. It's to ask for permission and permission to be given to
203 the guys family and then the two families have good fellowship.

204 **R2H:** My dad never told me all those things (laughs). Well I didn't ask him, I only
205 knew ilobolo had to be done, everybody does it, so I did what everybody else does.

Int: What are your views about this ilobolo?

206 **R2H:** I think because it's always been this way, everyone has always gone this
207 route, so it has significance somehow. So I just go with the flow. Because it's always

208 been done and even the church acknowledges that it should be done. So if it's
209 acknowledged by the church, then who are we to say away with it? That's my view.

210 **R2W:** Well I like that it be done. But obviously there are certain things about it – but
211 we didn't go through that – certain things that are cultural. It was mainly because I
212 spoke to my dad about it, that 'since I'm Christian I prefer that we not do those things
213 even though you want to do them because that's how you know things are done.
214 So for me, I think it's a good way the way he explained it that it's a way of showing
215 respect. Because I mean we don't grow out of trees and bushes, we come from a
216 home and it's a good thing that a person come ask permission for you from your
217 home properly. It's an orderly way and respectful way of actually asking for a hand
218 in marriage. So for me I think there's no problem, I have no problem with it.

219 **R2H:** Same here, I have no problem with it. Especially if the church approves it,
220 then I'm fine. I don't even ask questions, I just do it.

Int: What is your understanding of the phrase 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'?

221 **R2H:** No one is born from isolation. You can't be a secluded tree standing just alone.
222 You need a support, of the community, the support of everybody. That's how we
223 are, human, we are social beings. So you can't just be like you're not going to talk
224 to anybody, you don't want anyone's help. That's impossible. That's what it means.

225 **R2W:** Uhm, I'm just going to add on what he said. It's basically that and also that as
226 people we learn from other people, there are certain things we learn from other
227 people. So I think in a whole person there are certain pieces and traits which are a
228 contribution made by another person that you've encountered in your life. So they've
229 made a certain deposit in your life and that's what makes you the person that you
230 are. Your experiences and encounters with other people make up the person that
231 you are.

Int: What would you say this phrase means for marriage in particular?

232 **R2H:** I think generally, you know because you've been saying it, back in Genesis –
233 man cannot live alone and all those things. Man cannot live alone so you need a
234 partner to assist you in many things I think it's a principal, it's something that God
235 created. Especially for man – we have a certain way of seeing things, a certain way
236 of doing things, so if you have somebody who's always there with you, they'll assist

237 you in seeing things differently. To take life in a different way, approach, take your
238 decisions in a different way. Because when you're single you decide in a different
239 way than when you have a companion, a wife, spouse who can help in your
240 decisions.

241 **R2W:** I think mainly for me a point that stands out is companionship. Having
242 someone. Because when the Bible speaks about the two shall become one, the
243 process of becoming one requires certain characteristics that you learn as a person
244 while single. Like you can't be a selfish person and have a successful marriage.
245 You can't he a hateful, unforgiving person and be married. So those small character
246 traits you grow with as a single person contributes to the marriage institution
247 because you have to be forgiving, you have to be selfless at times, there are
248 sacrifices that you have to make for the next person. So to have someone who's
249 going to do it for you and to have someone you can do that for, you can sacrifice
250 for, that makes marriage beautiful for me in that sense.

Int: What would you say is the role of family/parents in a marriage?

251 **R2H:** To me so far, it's advice, there's nothing else my parents do except to advise
252 me. It's to give advice. That's the only thing I can say my parents have contributed.
253 I haven't experienced other things right now. If you were to say what's the role of a
254 parent to a child I could list from birth till now but because I've only been married for
255 7 months, they only thing they've done is to advise me. So unless there's something
256 else that happens, then only can I say they've also done this.

Int: What else would you appreciate your parents to do for you?

257 **R2H:** I think what they do is sufficient for me so far. Unless there are other things I
258 need from them because right now there's nothing else I can say I need.

259 **R2W:** For me, well it's obviously advice because it's good to take advice from people
260 who've actually walked the journey. I think another area where I can expect their
261 involvement is that they be able to accept and support a decision that we make in
262 terms of how we want to lead our family. Because as much as we come from them
263 as parents, it doesn't necessarily mean that our home will be structured like theirs.
264 There are certain things that we will do differently from them. For example, they will
265 prefer to have five or six kids and we'll prefer not having children at all. So I think

266 it's important for me that they accept that and support the vision that we both have
267 for our family.

Int: Genesis 2:24 says 'The man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife…' what is your understanding of this verse?

268 R2H: To me it means you're no more a boy, you need to grow up, you need to take
269 responsibility for your own life. Find a wife, take responsibility. Because I mean
270 when you take a look at people who are not married, I'm not saying all of them
271 obviously, but when you're not married, there's immaturity that's there somehow.
272 You'll find someone saying because they are single they can do this and do that but
273 when you're married you can't go without saying where you're going. Not that I didn't
274 do the same when I lived at home, but you continue those responsibilities. You're
275 responsible for another person and the household, I mean you grow up basically.
276 This verse means grow up, get married and stop playing games (laughs).

277 R2W: Oh for me I think basically it's just stepping into a new territory altogether
278 and the process of becoming for me it's a lifetime thing. 'cause I've realized that
279 there's just so many different things about me and my husband and it's probably
280 gonna take us the rest of our lives to become one. But it's a process that's gonna
281 happen continuously and we obviously have to be intentional about it and take not
282 of those little things that will help us to become one. It's about stepping into a new
283 territory, defining life differently, you are defined differently, your space is different,
284 your perspective is different. Everything just changes. You aren't just by yourself,
285 you are with someone now.

286 Int: In your view, does this verse contradict or agree with what the concept of ubuntu
287 means when it comes to marriage?

288 R2H: I think it's the same because you're taking families from different backgrounds.
289 Marriage joins families. You don't marry someone who's in isolation, you marry
290 someone who's part of a family. So when you marry them, you bring families back
291 together. You need another family. If there was only my family, who would I marry?
292 So the family I marry into actually 'makes me a person'. That family has 'made me
293 a person' by accepting me and coming to join my family to be one big family. Umuntu
294 ngumuntu ngabantu, Genesis 2 I went and married into that family and it 'made me
295 a person'.

296   **R2W:** I don't think it's different as well because, um, marriage will never survive if

297   you live like its just you and your partner only. They'll always be the involvement of

298   families. That's something we cannot change whether we like it or not. Family will

299   somehow be involved, community will somehow be involved, the people we are

300   exposed to at work, wherever we go, they'll be somehow involved and contribute a

301   certain, um, and make a certain contribution to our marriage. So I think it's no

302   different from the thing that's said by Genesis 2:24 and the concept of umuntu

303   ngumuntu ngabantu. So I don't think those concepts are different things, they're not.

304   For me it's the same.

Appendix F

Interview transcript of Respondent 3 where R3W is the wife and R3H is the husband.

Individual questions: R3W

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

1 **R3W:** I think I can say our families were fairly involved but we were mainly driving
2 the process. Obviously when it comes to things like the lobolo, that's more their
3 thing, you're kinda there as a bystander really. That's the main thing that I can say
4 they facilitated and lead but outside of that, we planned our own wedding. Even on
5 the day, we were kinda our own wedding planners. We got help here and there,
6 obviously you can't do everything by yourself, but I think we were the main ones
7 kind of directing. Obviously we consulted with them, we had to tell them that this is
8 how we'd like our wedding day to pan out. We kinda gave direction and they
9 supported. We had the lobolo then we had a white wedding. We didn't do a
10 traditionally wedding because we had glitches where there was a bit of
11 disagreement where we couldn't get to a conclusion with the families because we
12 wanted to have one day, do everything and finish but they were like 'oh culturally
13 you have to have umembeso and you have to do it this way'. So we agreed that
14 we will do the traditional or the gift sharing ceremony at a different time, so we
15 haven't done that as yet.

Int: You've been married for five years now, has there been no pressure from your families to do the traditional wedding since you haven't done it yet?

16 **R3W:** No. Because when we made the agreement (stutters) we'll do it when we're
17 all financially ready. We haven't…we've really focused on building our own lives
18 after the wedding. And, um, there hasn't been the right time to do it really, so
19 yeah, we still, we don't know when it's gonna happen. They understand that we're
20 Christian, yes they're also Christian, but we want to do things in a special way. So
21 I think it was clear from the beginning that this is how we'd like our wedding to be
22 and our lives going forward. Ordinarily they would be putting pressure but because

23   they understand where we stand when it comes to, uhm you know…we're not

24   saying tradition is bad, you know what I'm saying, but I think in terms of priority list,

25   I think that we made sure that we've done everything to honour them as parents.

26   And to honour God as well. I don't think we…we haven't completely disregarded

27   and said 'we don't want whatever, your input or how you want to do things'. We're

28   at a point where they understand that we will do it, we haven't forgotten about it.

29   Our marriage doesn't necessarily hinge on whether we've done this ceremony or

30   not. It will come when the time allows.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's involvement in your marriage process as you've outlined their involvement?

31   **R3W:** I think the advantage is that you kinda have people to back you up. You

32   have somebody to encourage you along the way. 'Cause I think the dynamics of

33   family are very complex especially when it comes to things like marriages. 'Cause

34   when you talk about family you have to think your immediate family and then

35   there's extended family. More often than not, not all family members are on the

36   same page regarding what needs to happen. So we had our parents, which is like

37   our inner circle, those are our…we have to consult with them first and okay things

38   with them first and all of those things. And then our parents…because of how

39   hierarchal our culture is in a way, you know as children you can't just call a

40   meeting to say whatever you want, you have to do it in a certain way. So our

41   parents kinda acted as mediators between us and the rest of the family. So we

42   would discuss things with our parents, we'd call them, even when we were

43   planning the wedding, we all met together and said this is what we'd like to do, this

44   is the date we're proposing. So we got a buy-in first from them, and they were now

45   the ones advocating for us to the rest of the family. So my dad would then have to

46   sit with the uncles and explain that this is how the kids want things to happen. So

47   that was a huge benefit because we had our parents on our side. They did

48   obviously face a lot of opposition because some of the elders would go 'but why

49   are you letting the kids control you?'. I guess they were like the protective barrier

50   between the negativity from other people…you know other people can be very

51   adamant in that 'this is how things need to be done, we will not let these kids

52   dictate to us how things should be done'. So I think my parents really did play a

53   huge role in mediating the whole process and allowing it to happen the way we

54 wanted it to. I don't know in terms of a disadvantage, I mean, you know, like I said,

55 I wouldn't say personally there was a disadvantage. But maybe I would say,

56 maybe the distress or the stress that they were under (laughs) where they were

57 constantly fighting. Or maybe at least the rest of the other extended family

58 members would look at us now an be like 'you guys are disobedient' or 'you've

59 neglected your culture' or whatever negative opinions or ideas they hold about you

60 now because of how we did the wedding. Maybe, you know, I can say that is so

61 much of a disadvantage.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

62 **R3W:** Absolutely not (laughs) I think they were shocked 'cause we were quite

63 young so it was like a shock to their system, but they were happy nonetheless.I

64 sat down with them and explained where I was coming from so I thing from that

65 perspective they understood. 'Cause we've known each other for a while. Before

66 we started dating we had known each other for about 5 or 6 years prior to that but

67 we were not like an item. But when we started dating we dated for a few months

68 and then we got engaged. And two years later we got married. So it was a very

69 short period where it felt like things were moving very fast. So you really had to sit

70 down with them and explain where we were coming from and how we got to the

71 place where we're at today. So there was no pressure at all.

Int: Did they challenge your decision to get married in any way?

72 **R3W:** They didn't challenge it. I think they were, how can I put it? It was more of a

73 shock, you know. 'Our child is still young, will she be able to handle it?' They were

74 scared from that perspective. So I think that's where they had their own

75 reservations to say 'okay, are you sure, are you ready about this? Who's this

76 person?' and all of that. We just had to work extra hard for me to get to know my

77 husband's family and they would get to know me. And for my family to get to know

78 my husband so that they would get to know what kind of person he is. So I think

79 we focused a lot on just getting them to be comfortable with…getting my family to

80 be comfortable with my husband and getting my husband's family to be

81 comfortable with me. Because parents…I think you'll get a quicker buy in from

82 them if they feel you're marring the right person. Not that you should marry the

83 person that they want, if they can get to know your partner, I feel like it helps, if

84   they can get to know the person they can get to make the match themselves to

85   say 'okay this will be a suitable partner for my child. So it will help the process of

86   that.

Int: My next question would have asked what your parent's involvement was in terms of who you chose to marry and you've in a way answered that. You've mentioned that you made an effort for your families to get to know who you were marrying, how exactly did you do that?

87   **R3W:** We would spend time with our families together. My husband would come

88   visit me at my house. We would celebrate…like we celebrated my birthday with

89   my family and he was there. So those things. Instead of going off by yourself but

90   we made sure at least let's try and get to know the families. If there was something

91   at my house I would invite him, you know for family events. We would often go to

92   visit his family, you know every now and then we would go visit his family. So

93   that's basically what we did. Just going for random visits, getting to know the

94   people, talking, that kind of thing.

Int: After you were married and at present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

95   **R3W:** They're not that involved. They're as involved as we want them to be. I think

96   we learnt a lot when we did our marriage counselling in terms of, you know they

97   teach you a lot about cleaving and leaving and how do you build. So you

98   acknowledge that it's two people coming together to form a new family. Our

99   approach has always been we're forming a new family so we don't want it to look

100   exactly like my family. So I don't have to go 'but I'm gonna do everything that my

101   mom did. I've seen how marriage pan out in my family so this is how a marriage

102   should look like'. And neither did we go with my husband's side. There's always

103   been an acknowledgement that we come from two different background, different

104   families, but what we are building is a new family. So I'd say that a lot of the major

105   decisions we make by ourselves really. We'll kinda inform our parents, we'll ask

106   for their…so that they know what's going on in our lives, and they can give us their

107   blessings. But we rarely go to ask for permission…and also because of our belief

108   system. Like if we have problems, we would rather go speak to somebody at

109   church or somebody that we trust because that's how we want to live our lives. So

110   we know that okay from this person this is the kind of advice that you're going to

111   get. So we go where we go where we feel that the help we're going to get fits into

112   our lifestyle. Even after we got married, and I think it was very clear even from our

113   wedding ceremony because the pastor was very clear that 'you need to allow the

114   kids to build their own family as the people who are here at the wedding you are

115   here to support them. You're here to encourage them. But you're not here to

116   dictate to them…you need to allow them to make their own mistakes. You need to

117   allow them to come to you to ask for help but you shouldn't be like imposing

118   yourself on them'. And I think our families really understood it. When I say family I

119   mean our parents really understand. They not only understand that this is how we

120   wanted to do our wedding but they really understand the heart that we have, or

121   this is how we want to live out our marriage life as well. I think, like I said, I think

122   there is a little bit of hold back…either they hold back or completely by in. But

123   there's not a lot of pressure to say, uh you know, '*makoti* (daughter in law) do this'.

124   My mother in-law is very much like, 'do you' you know. We talk, we have a good

125   relationship even from both sides, we check up on them regularly so they definitely

126   know what's happening or where we at, so we don't keep them in the dark. So

127   they know, we keep them updated. In terms of their influence, or them saying 'this

128   is what you should be doing', there's not a lot of that happening.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families current involvement in your marriage?

129   **R3W:** So, I think…what are the advantages? I mean it's good that they…I would

130   say I like that they understand, they're open enough to understand that this is who

131   we are, as uh a new family in formation. I think that's really been the part I've

132   enjoyed the most. If our parents were not supportive or insisting to sticking to one

133   way of doing things, we'd be in a different…you know we'd always have conflict. I

134   really think, even from their side…I mean I do acknowledge that our parents, even

135   my in-laws, even if they had the lee way, they wouldn't be like up in our business

136   and trying to tell us to do things, they're not like that. But I appreciate…there's a lot

137   of things that they had to unlearn and embrace a new way of doing things…so that

138   from their side…they have to, how can I put it…almost humble themselves, you

139   know learn something new and allow us to be…allow us even if they feel like 'we

140   don't always agree but we understand where you're coming from', you know, but

141 still be supportive. So I think that's the one thing, even though we're not, we're

142 might not be doing things exactly how they would like things to be done but they

143 are still supportive. So they don't hold that against us. So they never speak about

144 it in a negative light or anything like that. So I think we have their one hundred

145 percent support so that is an advantage.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

146 **R3W:** I think it has benefitted our marriage because it would be source of conflict if

147 one of us is constantly saying 'my mom said this so lets do it'. So I think that the

148 fact that they allow us to kind of develop our own way according to our belief

149 systems helps us. Then we don't have to go against what we believe so that they

150 can be happy. But we know that we can be who we are and know that they're

151 okay of it. They're at peace with it, they're happy with it. I think it's definitely

152 worked in our favour that we have them be that way.

Int: You keep mentioning the issue of belief systems, do your families believe differently than you?

153 **R2W:** So my parents are Christian but they also, they also do things traditionally.

154 So they're not, uh, I don't know how to put it, I don't want to say they're not

155 Christians like us (laughs) if that makes sense. My mom is Baptist, my dad doesn't

156 go to church but he reads the Bible, it's that kind of thing. But I definitely think they

157 are believers but then they'll still like, uhm, go to, do ancestral like you know we'll

158 do, uh, *sizo bika* (reporting to ancestors) or do *umsebenzi wamadlozi*

159 (rituals/ceremonies performed for ancestors) or something like that. But I mean I

160 don't think it's, it's not a big big difference but it…(stutters) I don't know how to

161 explain it..it's…it's not a big difference in terms of our belief systems, but it's like

162 not different but it is different, if that makes sense.

Individual questions: R3H

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

163 **R3H:** I'm sort of in between or split family reason being because my mom's side of
164 the family and my dad's side of the family are not really in good communication
165 with each other. However my mom's side of the family was involved from the
166 beginning to the end. Meaning even when it was time to get the negotiators they
167 were present. So it's that side of the family that went for negotiations. Also when I
168 was having problems, because I did go to my father's side of the family first to ask
169 them, but then they gave me a lot of issues and some of the talks that came from
170 their side saying that 'if we don't get involved your wedding and your marriage is
171 not gonna go so well and you gonna have bad luck. You may not even have kids
172 in your marriage because you're not doing things according to us. You need to
173 come back.' But me going back to using everything about them meant that now
174 the whole thing needed to go back to them sorting out their issues which they
175 were both not willing to sort their issues as the two families. But however my
176 uncles from my moms side were involved just until the wedding day so they were
177 present.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's
involvement in your marriage process?

178 **R3H:** I guess the good part about it was to really have family to go represent me.
179 That was the really good part. And that atleast some of the things that I asked
180 them to do and do they did. Not everything but atleast some of them they
181 respected me enough to go with what I had asked them to go do. I guess the bad
182 part was on one of the events they went there and they disagreed together when
183 they were there with what had to happen. When they had to disagree with each
184 other in the midst of negotiations. It's not a good representative. And also what
185 made it worse is that one of them went there already drunk and was pushing his
186 own agenda. I remember at the last negotiation I was actually angry at them when
187 we came back from them. I was not very impressed. But you know atleast I'm
188 grateful that the other side didn't take that as bad as I did. But that was a low blow
189 for me what they did.

Int: Did you manage to resolve these issues with them?

190 **R3H:** I did shout at them and we just moved on. I did let them know that I wasn't
191 happy. And they spoke their part, the till went back to the part of you know 'we are

192   the adults, you are young and we know we're representing you and whatsover' I

193   was like 'okay' but we did move on from that, I'm not holding any grudges against

194   them or it's not something if we have to have an argument that I'll go back and

195   bring back a page from that file. It's something that we've moved on from my side.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

196   **R3H:** First things first this is what I'll say. From my mom's side of the family I'm the

197   only married person (laughs) In terms of I'm the only person who's paid lobolo. I

198   think the last lobolo was sort of done with my mom many years ago but none of

199   my uncles have paid lobolo. They've had partners, they've had kids but that has

200   not gone further. To answer you, there was no influence. When I went to them I

201   went to them asking that I need people to go negotiate for me. It was not a matter

202   of, you know, uhm… Some of them didn't even know I had a partner so they just

203   found out that by the way this person wants to get married.

Int: What was your parent's involvement, influence or comment in terms of who you chose to marry?

204   **R3H:** uh, no. They actually weren't. They were quiet happy with my choice. I

205   guess the one thing that, they were happy with my maturity and going back to the

206   whole part that I became the youngest, well not the youngest because I still have

207   a younger brother, but being young in the family and proposing to do something

208   like that. And my gran was mostly proud of me because she has been shouting

209   and shouting at my uncles but no results. So it was a joyful moment for her and for

210   my mother as well.

Int: After you got married and at present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

211   **R3H:** Uh, I think what I will say first is that they had a willingness to let me go to

212   start up my own life. They didn't hold back much. My mom's involvement actually

213   is not so much into the marriage but when she'll call me from time to time she will

214   have an emphasis of ensuring that I take care of my wife. I do the best that I can

215   making sure she's emphasising that I must be willing to go the extra mile, she

216   must not go an overwork, and over-sweat while I'm around. So she's just…maybe

217   perhaps its because of what has happened in her own marriage but she's always

218 been pushing me to get my family and my marriage well and to get it work. But

219 with regards to them telling me what to do, when and how, uhm not so much,

220 except for this, you know, they still want me to do the traditional wedding which my

221 wife has probably told you about. So they still want that to be done and my mom is

222 willing to help me through that. But outside of that I don't think there's much of

223 involvement that they're having.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families current involvement in your marriage?

224 **R3H:** What's good is they don't tell us what to do and how to live our life. I think

225 that helps us to navigate ourselves, to make our own mistakes. And some of the

226 things that we potentially like to do that are not normal to how they consider, or

227 people who are married, we are able to do them and they will not pitch in to say

228 'well you need to do that and to do this.' So there's that nice freedom that one has

229 around to how we move forward with our lives. I guess I'm enjoying that freedom

230 where we're not being told. I'm trying to think what's not that nice about it…uhm I

231 can't think of anything. Maybe I'm enjoying the freedom a bit too much (laughs).

232 But they do check in, they do remind us that we're part of the family and

233 everything, we're not totally left out to be ourselves…Maybe they are scared of

234 me, I don't know. The thing is I'm very verbal and I stand up for myself and I've

235 stood up for them on other families with regards to other issues so I don't know to

236 what extent they actually have the guts to take me on as a person. Maybe

237 sometimes…I could tell sometimes when they raising something they wanna say

238 they make it as a suggestion, they don't tell me. They wait for me to say 'okay, it's

239 fine I'm happy I will do that' and if I'm saying that 'I won't do that' they gonna try

240 and say 'but if you do this it will be nice'…they don't give straight demands. Maybe

241 they're like this because they don't want to push or they are fine and open about it,

242 I can't give you an exact answer.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

243 **R3H:** I think with that question a question I should ask my wife is, with how my

244 family is, how does she receive it. Because I may say I'm fine with it but we come

245 from different families. She comes from a structured family with a mom and a dad

246 and I know from her side of the family, the family is still together, the extended
247 family, they communicate, they throw functions together. So question will be with
248 my family seeming almost absent, does she see that as something that's negative
249 where maybe she sees as they just don't care and they just letting us to live our
250 lives because they just don't care. So it would be great to really find out what she
251 thinks because for me that's fine like I'm okay, I'm good sometimes she's the one
252 to even remind me like 'when last did you call your mom? When last did you call
253 your gran? When last did you call these people' I'm like 'oh' (smiles) I'll call them.'
254 Even if I communicate with them once a month it's not so much of a push on my
255 side. And now the other side of that, is that her side of the family, it's not that
256 they're pushing to be involved but they like to draw us in, but I'm not used to that.
257 Sometimes I feel like I'm now changing who I am or changing a little bit of how we
258 are. Sometimes they'll invite us to a function and I'll be like 'but I wanted us to
259 have a weekend at home'now if I say know how are they gonna judge…because
260 they will know that you're not the one who's saying no, it is potentially me.' Now
261 how are they going to relate to me around that and how are they going to see me,
262 so there's those back and forth. I know how I feel with those, sometimes I'm very
263 open and I want to go and sometimes I'm not so open, my facial expression even
264 change when they invite us. Maybe because I don't know many people or maybe I
265 haven't plugged in as a '*mkwenyana*' (son in law) to the family. I've seen some of
266 the '*mkwenyana*'s' have plugged into the family and I haven't. So maybe that part
267 is missing. But also I'm acknowledging that I'm the '*mkwenyana*' on the younger
268 side as well, the people that I can relate to…in terms of age, the younger kids.
269 Whilst when I speak I can relate to the older ones. So there are those dynamics.
270 Perhaps one day there will be another '*mkwenyana*' whom will be able to click so
271 that when we all get invited I'll have somebody that I can chat to and can chill with
272 and will not feel otherwise. As much as I'm very verbal and talkative, but when I
273 get there and they're dancing and drinking and all that, I want to sit there and just
274 watch. It may feel like this person is excluding themselves whereas at the same
275 time I'm not sure what I need to be doing, that's a very uncomfortable space
276 because I'm a person who's very involved…cause if I have to sit there and be a
277 guest I feel awkward.

Int: Which cultural acts/ceremonies did you have to perform as part of the marriage process (e.g. payment of ilobolo)?

278 **R3W:** We only did ilobolo.

Int: What is your understanding of ilobolo? What does it mean?

279 **R3W:** My understanding is its about bringing two families together. So in that the
280 cows will represent a gift which is a token of saying thank you to the bride-to-be's
281 family for raising her and providing them with a wife. That's basically what they
282 represent…you're building a relationship between the two families, that's what I
283 really understand it to be.

284 **R3H:** What I'll say is, I guess our lobolo was bit a different from how other people
285 experience it. I know of people where they feel that was the worst thing to happen
286 to them. Whether it's from families not reaching an agreement to them feeling like
287 they were being robbed on the spot. It was not about relationship it was a transaction
288 that happened. From my side it was not a transaction and I really appreciate that it
289 was not a transaction. I was waiting for a transaction to happen (laughs) but we
290 were disappointed with how they responded. It helps with the...it's almost like a
291 formal introduction to the two families together. It's also sort of a game where you
292 chose how you start your relationship with one another whether you start y making
293 the other family feel abit annoyed or whatever. It is also sort of a test to what extent
294 you really want to have a relationship. Like are you doing it because you want to get
295 it over and done with…'marry our child and move away' or you're willing to take in
296 some of the irritating things we'll present to you, not because we want you to go
297 away but we want to test you to what extent…how serious you are towards what
298 you're looking for…But however there's always that one uncle or that one grandad
299 that is very upset with how things happened because it didn't go their way. Those
300 ones when you come across in functions or whatsoever, they remind you of all the
301 things that they didn't get.

302 **R3W:** I think it also goes back to what I was sharing about different kinds of families.
303 With us our parents were very involved with the lobolo, I know for a fact that my
304 parents who said this is how much we want, this is how it's going to be done. The

had to just tell the uncles that this is what they must do. In other cases you can have a case where he uncles have a huge say and come with their own agendas.

Int: What are your views about this ilobolo?

R3H: From my side, I would like to continue with it with my daughter or daughters. I would like to make the person or man who'll come to ask for my daughter or daughters, give them a little bit of a tough time, not to chase them away (laughs). The intention will not be to chase them away, I'll also just be trying to create memories…that relationship that it actually brings towards the two families. I guess the only one thing I will say is just the carefulness around the charges that are being brought forward. That's where the issue comes in. I don't think…maybe most of the people the concern is not the concept of lobolo, it is the amount and the transaction or what it has turned into. Where others go in with the intentions of I want to make money out of it. My heart is this: It's my job to raise my kids, get them through school, get them through university, for them to be launched very well into their life…So when somebody comes and says I want to live the rest of my life with your daughter, I don't think I will want them to all of a sudden be paying back…when I enter the interaction of lobolo it will not be for the next person to pay back the whole amount spent on raising them because I was doing the raising for my daughter and for them to live a good life. I think for me a better repayment that as a parent I can get is a marriage going well. Good treatment coming out of it and them living a good life that is much more beneficial to me that I can sleep not worried about my child. Wherever they are they are sorted, they are not being abused, they are living a life that is good. For the sake of creating memories and creating that relationship, I will engage with lobolo. For them, allowing them to say thank you and also for them to know that this is not a person that you just picked up on the street, but they have a family that they're coming from. And you're going to say thank you so much for raising them but not being a transaction between us and the people.

R3W: I think it's really important for couples to really reflect on this experience. Whether it was good or bad. I think with us…if you asked us when we were still newly weds we would have given a different answer. We've had a change of mind and a change of heart regarding this topic and it's only because we've taken the time to, we do talk about it from time to time. At first it almost seemed like…we don't

336 believe in it, we don't think it has relevance but the more you think about it and you
337 reflect, you start to really glean on important lessons that it has like my husband
338 was saying. I think also just understanding that it's not just about the couple, or even
339 the parents that what do we think about it…because you're building a family you
340 can't make it all about you and your belief. You need to be able to…how do I
341 accommodate other people. What if the husband-to-be's family really thinks this is
342 important, are we really going to be the ones who stand in the way and say no, we
343 don't believe in it. You need to make room for reasonable compromise. Like my
344 husband said, you don't have to rob people…but I think there's still value in having
345 that formal interaction with the family when they meet and have a discussion around
346 it. It establishes the – it's almost like a foundation and you're trying to build the two
347 families. So I'm afraid if you miss that part like for us Africans, I fear that it will be
348 very difficult moving forward to feel like a family because you've never had that
349 formal introduction. So it's going to be very difficult to then build going forward. We'll
350 end up living separate lives where you know the families but don't really have a
351 relationship, we don't see them as family. So I think we can still hold on to some of
352 those cultural practices. We don't have to so it one hundred percent the way that
353 they're done but we have to keep the principal of what they're about and carry that
354 forward. I think that is important.

Int: What is your understanding of ubuntu as usually expressed in the phrase
'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'?

355 **R3W:** I think it speaks about the value of being in a community, benefitting from
356 everyone in the community in different way. If I think in the township context when
357 we were growing up you knew that every mother was almost like your mother. It
358 was that kind of thing where you respected…you were not like 'you're not my mother
359 I will not listen to you.' But its' that thing…it's more of a community involvement, like
360 you sharing...you know, we can pass down clothes to people who don't have or your
361 neighbour who is younger than you would receive your clothes. You can help each
362 other with food. You can go ask for sugar next door, that kind of thing. It speaks to
363 that. I think in the urban context, shu, it's a little bit...at least I according to my
364 understanding I don't see that thing much in our urban context, in our community.
365 We all live behind high walls, electric fences, you don't see your neighbours, that
366 kind of thing. There isn't much community involvement. But I think where I can see

367 that out here is in our church community because we're quiet involved in our church.

368 We're a community. We're not a community because we live next to each other but

369 because we do life together. I think in that context that's where I can say we are

370 living that out. And obviously in our families as well, we do help out. We are involved.

371 It's not just monetary, I don't think its monetary value but also if somebody has a

372 wedding or funeral, or event, are you there to assist, to be the hands, to do what

373 needs to be done, you know, washing dishes, clearing up, that kind of thing…I think

374 that's my understanding of it.

375 **R3H:** I agree with what she said, I'll just add this, I guess the emphasis to it is that

376 we don't exist in silos and we should not push to exist in silos. So it's recognizing

377 that there's people around you, but them being around you they are not merely

378 bricks or stones. They have needs that you can contribute to and recognizing that

379 they have needs and you can be a blessing to them and they can also have the

380 same contribution towards your needs. The real heart of ubuntu should be loving

381 others, I can just take from Scripture, the second greatest commandment, love

382 others as you love yourself.

Int: What would you say this phrase means for marriage in particular?

383 **R3H:** I would say from the different families that we come from they taught us that

384 – when it comes to loving other people, pushing to help out other people, reaching

385 out to other people in different aspects like my wife was saying it's not just on

386 finances but on different aspects of being there for other people. From our side,

387 we're there for single parents and the child, we draw the child in to feel like they're

388 a part of our family as well. As we speak, we actually have a lot of family that we

389 refer to as family that are not our biological family. We've live out those values and

390 gain the same thing from them. I think our upbringing has put that a lot in us and

391 we're living it out without an effort, it's who we are.

392 **R3W:** I don't have much to add, I think it's really about doing that as a couple… you

393 can do it as an individual but in a marriage context…still showing that friendliness,

394 love and kindness to people, but doing it together.

395 **Int:** What would you say is the role of family/parents in a marriage?

R3W: I think the role of parents is really to support. To guide, to give advice, and share experiences 'cause obviously they are older and a bit wiser than you so they've had more lived experiences than you've had. So I think even if you don't share the same belief systems one hundred percent, but there's always lessons to be learnt from them…There's always a role that they have to play and we just have to allow them to play it.

R3H: It's free day care (laughs)…They have a role to play, if you're fortunate enough to have parents that don't play a negative role in a marriage where now they tell you 'you need to do this', where they don't respect you. They need to know that they can give advice even the things that are cultural or traditional they can let you know about it, but if you don't want to they shouldn't force you into doing that. Because they need to teach you what they've learned. Some things you will not find it in books, it is the information that you'll get from them. And they need to pass on that information to the married people. Some information they can't pass on until you're married, so they need to pass it on when you're married and you need to hear it and you need to pass it on as well. They have a big role to play as long as they don't become the married people in somebody else's marriage.

Int: Genesis 2:24 says 'The man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife…' what is your understanding of this verse?

R3H: If you are a man, it means run away from your parents (laughs). On a serious note, it means you have taken the lessons that you need from them and you need to be able now to start living out their teachings that they have taught you. It's more of a learning phase and practicing space. You need to allow yourself to be in a space where you practice the things which you've learnt without them having to teach you every step of the way. So don't go back to them for everything. Don't run back to them if you having a bit of issues with your partner. Attempt to solve issues with your partner. They've done their part. You need to do your part and don't run back to them. Having to know that I'm married, I shouldn't go back to my parents each time me and my wife don't talk to each other or we're having issues, we need to work things out ourselves. It doesn't mean they're no longer part of my family, they can still come visit and whatever but them being priority in my life actually needs to change.

R3W: It really goes back to you're forming a new family, it will be parts of a little bit of each of you. It will draw on your past experiences as individuals but now you're one person…You leave the old and cleave to each other.

Int: In your view, does this verse contradict or agree with what the concept of ubuntu means when it comes to marriage?

R3W: I think they can co-exist but with a bit of effort…It makes things a little less complicated if you can remove yourselves, it doesn't mean you have to migrate to another country but if you can say this is our house, even if it's a room or an apartment, this is our home, away from his home and my home. I understand that not every couple will have the privilege of having their own house, but if that's not the case, I think boundaries need to be created…Being a little bit removed from each of the families make it easier to establish independence. I don't think its an either or, it's either you leave and cleave or you show ubuntu. I think we can find common ground.

R3H: I don't that it's an African or cultural issue, I think it's more of a human issue – the leaving and cleaving…When you have people who are possessive it also becomes and issue, whether I'm an Indian or Asian or coming from anywhere in the world. If parents have possessive issues, they don't want to let go of their kids and the kids don't want to exist outside of their parents then that particular child will have a problem in leaving and cleaving. It's a problem that goes from person to person. I don't think I've ever looked at ubuntu as something where it contradicts with the Word. If you don't understand what ubuntu means then you might thing there's a contradiction. Me leaving and cleaving to my wife doesn't mean I can't lend a helping hand to my family as long as me and my wife agree on doing that. So I can still be able to have ubuntu, it can exist like that and we still cleave to each other. So there's no clash that exists between ubuntu and leaving and cleaving.

Interview transcript of Respondent 4 where R4W is the wife and R4H is the husband.

<u>Individual questions: R4W</u>

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

1 **R4W:** They were very much involved. You know in our culture, marriage is one of
2 the things that is taken as…parents are very proud of. So they were very much
3 involved even to the extent of wanting to make things hard (smiles) because they
4 wanted to satisfy themselves. Otherwise it was a very nice and clean process, I
5 had no issues with anyone. Everybody was involved, my sisters, extended family,
6 neighbours, my parents – everybody. And all the support was there, I had no
7 problem. I mean from negotiations, to preparations. Them wanting to control
8 things the way that they wanted. Everything was smooth until the last day. I'm
9 happy with the support. According to our culture we're not part of the negotiation
10 process and unfortunately our mother is also not part of the process and
11 unfortunately my father is no more. So it was the extended family that was part of
12 it, the males from our family. So they negotiated according to the way that they
13 thought is the best, in line with the culture, the way that is going to satisfy my dad
14 who's now no more. They don't care about how you feel that much, it's about
15 them, doing what they think is right, and making sure everything must be satisfying
16 as much as possible on their side otherwise this marriage will not continue. So it
17 was a lot of negotiations, in fact they met about four to five times and there were a
18 lot of charges in the process. If the other family said they are going to arrive at
19 eight and they arrive at nine, nine-thirty, they are going to be charged for being
20 late…'We don't work like that, we're here at eight o'clock, and you can't tell us you
21 were late.' And for other stupid things. Like the other time, they arrived on Sunday
22 and they said 'you cannot do that, I mean we are Christians, we are supposed to
23 be at church, somebody is supposed to be preaching, so unfortunately we will
24 charge you an amount that is equivalent to a cow, so we need R15000 cause we
25 don't work like that all.' You know, those things that I was never happy about at

26   all…I was very much frustrated, I did not know what to do (laughs) So the process

27   went on until they actually reached half. The first price was that they are charging

28   ten cows and a cow was R5000 each. That is when my father was still alive when

29   they asked the price but had not yet started the negotiation process. So the

30   mistake was that they came back after my father had passed away and when they

31   came back they said 'we have prepared according to that price that you charged'.

32   But they said 'no, our brother never said that, our brother would never say that in

33   his senses, you're lying' and they said 'we've got the minutes' but they said 'no we

34   cannot rely on your minutes, we never forget what we are discussing so we are

35   not accepting R5000 per cow. We are telling you it's ten cows and each cow will

36   be different because cows are not the same…its actually R12000 for a female cow

37   and R15000 for a male, it's going to range between those prices.' Then they came

38   back, paying, paying, paying until they reached half of the amount. I don't even

39   know how much was charged because based on that you can't really tell. Because

40   they said 'we are not giving you a certain price, it will range, we'll tell you that now

41   we are charging you two female cows that are not equal, the other one is fatter

42   than the other one, and the other one is taller than the other one. It was a lot of

43   games which were boring me. They said 'we are not going to say anything until

44   you reach half, if you don't reach half, there is no handing over. We'll tell you when

45   you've reached half, you'll just keep coming back until you hear from us that you

46   are now at half the price.' My extended family was very much involved, my mother

47   as well because even though she was not inside there, she was always consulted

48   and making decisions, giving them to the once who are making the negotiations.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's
involvement in your marriage process as you've outlined their involvement?

49   **R4W:** I think the advantage, the most advantage is support because you feel

50   supported. You feel that you are not alone even if things don't go well according to

51   your expectations, like during the process. You know that they are there and they

52   are the ones who are going to feel it. The disadvantage is that I think the way that

53   was used long time ago is no longer that much that relevant these days because I

54   don't think it's fair that your feelings are not even considered at all during the

55   process. For instance, I told mom that she must not make the mistake to charge

56   anything for education there because once she charges for education, it will be

57 difficult for me to defend myself when I want to support them at home. And for that

58 matter, no one will ever afford to pay all the money that is incurred when someone

59 is studying so they must not go there. It was a fight and then eventually she

60 understood and said 'it's fine we're not going to charge for education.' So in that

61 money that they charged, there was no education simply because she wanted me

62 to continue helping her (laughs). So it was not about myself, it was her thinking

63 about herself. Because at home I'm the one who was doing a lot of things before I

64 got married. Otherwise I think that everything they do is twenty percent you and

65 eighty percent them. In the process I even said…my mother said they will have to

66 do *'ukuyalwa'* where they will tell you how do you behave in marriage…and I said

67 'I don't think this thing is relevant because you are telling me how to behave but

68 you will not be telling the husband how to behave and my reaction there will

69 depend on how I feel at that time, I will not consider things that you are going to

70 tell me, but it's fine, that process can go on, you can do it'. But unfortunately, at

71 the time of the handing over, the day of our marriage, my mom was not there

72 because she fell in the morning and we had to take her to the hospital so she was

73 not part of the wedding day so this thing of *'ukuyalwa'* did not happen because

74 she was not there…I don't think I was going to be listening anyway (laughs)

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

75 **R4W:** To be honest, I don't think they influenced me in anyway. I know that they

76 wanted the marriage to happen, they wanted me to get married, because when we

77 got married we were already having a child that was seven years old. So my

78 mother would ask me 'what is happening? Where is this guy?' and I was like 'you

79 know what, just leave it' (laughs). So my decision to get married did not involve

80 anyone or was influenced by...it was just my personal decision, looking at the

81 person I was going to marry so there was just no form of influence. But in their

82 minds I know that they always wanted something, movement towards that, it was

83 just a coincidence their wishes being fulfilled but otherwise on my side, I never

84 considered how they feel…it was not about them.

Int: What was your parent's involvement in terms of who you chose to marry?

85 **R4W:** They did not have any of that because they never met the person before we

86 got married. They never knew him because he was coming from very far…there

87   was nothing that made us meet each other's family…So they did not know how he

88   looked, or how he behaved, or how he is working…all of those things…so they did

89   not know, they had no idea, they just judged from the way that he is treating the

90   child…Because sometimes there are other people that will want to marry you but

91   maybe you are not in a relationship, they also did not know those things because I

92   didn't report them. And in the other case where I heard them knowing something, I

93   just dismissed anything that is related to marriage. So I never allowed them space

94   to influence my decision when it comes to the partner that I want.

Int: After you were married and at present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

95   **R4W:** It always depends on you, the extent to which you involve them. Something

96   which I do not do in fact maybe I do not do it because there is not yet a need to do

97   it. I'm not somebody who's reporting everything and everyday about my marriage.

98   They just know that we're doing well, we're fine, we call them to check if they are

99   doing well as well and that's it. Maybe if there is something that wants me to

100 involve them but at the moment I'm not somebody who's reporting everything to

101 everybody.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families current involvement in your marriage?

102 **R4W:** The advantage would be them sharing their experiences with you because

103 my mother was married to my father so they will be sharing, giving you advices.

104 But the disadvantage would be them wanting to take over now your decision-

105 making. Sometimes they think that think they are wise enough to know what you

106 want and what will take you there…and sometimes you'll find that what they are

107 saying is not inline with what you want and where you want to go. So obviously

108 consulting them, there are a lot of things you need to consider. The fact that their

109 experience is very old compared to the way that things are happening, that are

110 done now. So I would just consider those things if I need to consult them. So I'd

111 never allow them to decide for me or anything like that.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

R4W: I think it's working very much positively…on both sides of the family. Because I think we're treating both our families very much the same. It's working positively because we don't have any issues with their involvement and we don't have our marriage affected because of the way that they are involved or not involved…we are fine. I don't regret anyway in way that they are involved in the marriage.

Individual questions: R4H

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

R4H: From the day that I told my brothers…because when I got married, my mother was already late so I was working hand in hand with my brothers. I've got three brothers, and I'm the youngest. My two brothers in Eastern Cape are the ones that were mainly involved in the process because I would communicate with them because my wife's home is also in Eastern Cape. So for that arrangement I was communicating with those two brothers who are in Eastern Cape. After informing them that I was intending to get married, they were in full support of the initiative to an extent that they even committed to make some sort of contribution in the process. The person from the, uhm, woman perspective, the person who was involved was my older brother's wife who was responsible for organizing other things that would need ladies. So we started with the process, there was a meeting back at home. In that meeting they agreed on a date on which they would go to my wife's home to pay ilobolo…there was communication between the families to agree on a date. Then they went. There were no hick-ups. The process went smoothly…we went for the first time, we went for the second time and when we went for the third time it's where we agreed we'll be having a sort of a ceremony, wedding, not a big one. We had a wedding on the 21st of December 2018 at my wife's home.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's involvement in your marriage process?

136 **R4H:** I think the benefits were more than the disadvantages (laughs). They played

137 a huge role in the sense that it gave me a comfort in bringing my wife into the

138 same home where we live together in Eastern Cape. Their willingness to

139 participate in the process gave me that comfort. Disadvantages (laughs) I can't

140 think of any at the moment other than the fact that they are my siblings, because

141 they are my elder brothers, sometimes they will tend to play that parent role

142 (laughs) if you understand me. Forgetting that they are not my parents they are

143 just my siblings they just happen to be older than me (laughs). Which at some

144 point gave me…a courage, or made me to make a decision that I need to have my

145 own place where I'll be able to take my own decision without…consulting them,

146 you understand. I'd say that's the only disadvantage. In terms of decision-making,

147 it's not easy when you're staying together…their involvement…I don't think I need

148 much of their involvement at this stage. Obviously I will consult with them where

149 necessary but I think that now that we are a marriage they shouldn't be playing

150 that much role.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

151 **R4H:** They influenced me in the sense that they supported the idea. When I gave

152 them the name of the person that I'm planning to get married to, they fully

153 supported, there were no doubts from their side as well.

Int: Were they familiar with your wife?

154 **R4H:** They knew my wife because we happen to have a baby before we got

155 married (laughs). Our firstborn was born in August 2011. So when they went for

156 ilobolo it was not for their first time going there, they knew the family, they knew

157 my wife because they went to pay for damages. So since then, there was a

158 relationship between my wife and my family.

Int: After you got married and at present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

159 **R4H:** It's difficult for them to be involved because I'm staying in Gauteng, my wife

160 is staying in Eastern Cape, working there, staying there alone, I'm here with my

161 kids. So we only meet them, usually in December. So I'd say in December, their

162 involvement is only when it comes to decision making on things that need to be

163 done back at home. So if I want to do something there obviously I have to consult

164 them. They would influence what we do. Other than that, we do things our own

165 way cause we spend most of our time not there. So they only influence us…they

166 only play their role in our marriage when we are there in December for that

167 moment, it will be a week or two. Otherwise we are independent.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families current involvement in your marriage?

168 **R4H:** I would say there are more advantages because the person is married to me

169 and in as mush as I would love for them to be involved, they must be involved up

170 to a certain extent. You know, there's this belief that when you marry someone,

171 that person can just be used by anyone, anyhow. The person is not just married to

172 her husband…even a younger kid can expect your wife to do things while they are

173 just sitting. So the advantage is the lesser they are involved in our marriage, the

174 more time we find to develop ourselves to be independent. To learn things not

175 from within the family only but it gives us opportunity to learn things from outside

176 world as well. Disadvantages…it's only those decision-making…decisions where

177 they need to be involved, it's only those things. Of which I think when we have our

178 own place, it will not be necessary for us to consult with them that much.

179 Remember with this current situation if we are in Eastern Cape and we are

180 together there, if I want to do something back at home, I will have to consult with

181 them. If I have a different idea of how things should be done, sometimes they may

182 view it as if I'm trying to disregard their views. Yet it's not the case, it's just that my

183 wishes is that it should be done this way. Those are the disadvantages.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

184 **R4H:** I'd say maybe ninety-nine percent of the times it was good that we're around

185 them. There's quiet a number of things that she's learning from them as well,

186 especially from my brother's wife. Including other extended family members that

187 would come when we are there. So I think their involvement is adding value even

188 though there are those few negatives, but they are not that much.

Int: You've mentioned in the first section that you did ilobolo…which other cultural acts/ceremonies did you have to perform as part of the marriage process (e.g. payment of ilobolo)?

189   **R4W:** *Utsiki*

190   **R4H:** It's a sort of a welcoming…it's a ceremony that we do from the husband's
191   side to welcome the wife. We slaughter a sheep and give a name to the wife as
192   well. In the process the elders will also teach the wife how things are done.

193   **R4W:** The names that you cannot call (laughs) and such things. There's another
194   ceremony that's done, but we haven't done it. It's done after the *lobolo* has been
195   fully paid. That one is when the wife's family buys stuff, usually it's clothes,
196   blankets, furniture, and takes it to the husband's home where they are given a list
197   of people from the husband's side - the family members, elders accounting to their
198   houses… all of them will get something. So that one is done when the lobolo is
199   done so we've not yet done it, but it's part of the process as well. This ceremony is
200   called *ibhakede*.

Int: What is your understanding of *ilobolo* and *utsiki*?

201   **R4W:** We usually say *'imizi ayifani'* which means that the homes are different and
202   they do different things according to the way that they belief and in the religion that
203   they are members of. My understanding of the way that we did it from my side is
204   was just to…a form of knowing each other. I wanted to watch how we were doing
205   it because I'm always watchful of the things that I will end up…glorifying things
206   that are not God in the process of doing that. So what we did…ilobolo is the way
207   you introduce each other and the way you respect homes, according to my
208   understanding…for you to create a relationship that will last. *Utsiki*…because we
209   slaughtered a sheep and ate together as a family and then we talked, like being
210   introduced to the family, being told how we are doing things in this home and 'if
211   you don't know anything ask this one, this is the person you should speak to' and
212   all those things. It was just a way of bringing me to an understanding of how that
213   home works for them to know me and for me as well to know them.

214   **R4H:** My understanding is not different from that of hers. Starting with *ilbololo*, it's

215   just a way of showing that the person that you want to marry, you see value in her.

216   It's a symbol of building relationship between the two families. that's how I view it. I

217   think she has covered a lot on the issue of *utsiki*.

Int: What are your views about these ceremonies?

218   **R4W:** My view on the lobolo thing is that it is outdated, I don't think it is something

219   I would do with my children when they are getting married. Because the situations

220   are not the same, the ones that were happening long time ago and the way that

221   things are happening now with our generation. With the involvement of the court,

222   the process should be defined all together…Long ago you would get married and

223   be taken care of hundred percent by the family of the husband or the husband and

224   you'll be expected to sit there and serve them. These days it's different, you

225   contribute to whatever is being built as well so there's really few marriages where

226   one is dependent on another and even in that case, the law is involved to make

227   sure that the estate will be separated equally between the parties. So the wife will

228   come back with something, part of the estate if she is divorcing and even if she is

229   dying she will die and get something. It's either her children or siblings will get

230   something out of the portion that belongs to her. So the ilobolo thing is really no

231   longer relevant these days. On the part of *utski* I think *utsiki* it's just something like

232   you deciding to cook *umqushu* (beans and samp) instead of buying Nandos – to

233   me it's something that does not make any difference and it's adding no value to

234   anything. So it's something that I'll do if I want meat that day, if it coincides with

235   me wanting to eat meat on the day of welcoming *umakoti* (bride) or else *umakoti*

236   will just come in, I will just say 'sit down we will drink tea, this is the kitchen

237   (pointing around), this is our bedroom, these are the things that you're going to

238   use if you want to clean'. And that's it. It's really…whether it's done or not, it

239   makes no difference according to my understanding.

240   **R4H:** From my side as far as ilobolo is concerned, if it were to happen to my kids

241   that they want to get married, I think I'd apply different methods…something that is

242   different from the current norms. When we grew up I think there was a belief that if

243   you have more daughters you are rich (both laugh) because you'll be getting cows

244   for lobolo. That for me, I think it was a wrong belief or practice because if you get

245 these ten or twelve cows, even if your daughter is not being treated well there you
246 still send your daughter back because I think you've got this guilty conscious to
247 say 'how can you come back when you know my kraal is full of cows from that
248 family.' So you end up not accommodating your kids, whatever happens, whatever
249 treatment that she gets there, you push her back. So I think I would apply a
250 different method. I wouldn't treat it as if I'm selling my daughter. If it happens that
251 there is this man that wants to marry my daughter, I will do it my way then if my
252 daughter is not happy there, the man must release my daughter, I will welcome my
253 daughter. If I charge, I will charge whatever I want but it will not be about me
254 becoming rich out of this process.

Int: What is your understanding of ubuntu as expressed in the phrase *'umuntu
ngumuntu ngabantu'*?

255 **R4W**: My understanding of ubuntu is that you should respect people, especially
256 adults. The respect that you give to elders should exceed the respect you give to
257 your peers. So it's about that. It's also about understanding your position as a
258 person, and respecting other people's positions in the process. For instance, if you
259 are a teacher in a community, a poor community, you are obviously regarded as a
260 professional there, you are Cyril Ramaphosa of that place so you should
261 understand your position as a person…if you cough in a certain way, people will
262 want to cough like you. So you should understand yourself, your position like the
263 person that you are and you should also learn from others. If there are people that
264 you believe are role models, you should learn from those people and you should
265 also be able to make sure that the values that are important to you as a person,
266 you keep them. It's broader than what I've said. It's broad, it's deep…it covers a lot
267 of things. Because even the way you want your children to be treated will depend
268 on the way in which you define and believe in that concept of ubuntu. According to
269 our culture, a child is of the whole village, anyone can discipline your child if he's
270 wrong. So it's a very broad term that I think is important, it's just that these days,
271 ubuntu is diminishing…you'll hear of an adult person that is respected that having
272 raped a child…it's like now you don't know whether it's there or not. But it's
273 something I believe should be upheld if people have the same mind and
274 understanding of life. It's something that we should just adopt mutually and
275 uphold.

276 **R4H:** My understanding of ubuntu, in addition to what she has just mentioned, it's

277 that willingness to embrace people irrespective of colour, gender, age. Embrace

278 them, respect them, treat them the same way that you'd like to be treated. If they

279 are offering you something, accept it. If you reject it, reject it with proper reasons.

280 Show some respect if you are not willing to do something, don't just dismiss them.

281 That's basically it for me. There's quiet a number of things that I can mention but I

282 think mainly for me it's all about embracing people irrespective of their

283 background, culture, age, gender and so forth.

Int: What would you say *ubuntu* mean for marriage in particular?

284 **R4H:** The value that *ubuntu* would add to a marriage goes a long way. For

285 example, we are role models to our kids because we live with them. Everything we

286 do, they mimic it and even in future we'll be quoted that 'our parents used to do

287 things like this'. So if we don't practice *ubuntu*, they will mimic exactly that. They

288 will undermine people who live in squatter-camps because it's our belief that those

289 people should be undermined. If we embrace everyone and they see that…they

290 are likely to treat people in future the same way as well. In the process they'll be

291 learning that people are different – embrace people from different backgrounds as

292 well. In a way we are creating that understanding for our kids that people are

293 different and they should always be willing to embrace them. And then as a

294 couple, I believe that we can't live in isolation so if we don't have *ubuntu* it will

295 mean we'll be living in isolation, we'll be living sort of in a box and not learning

296 anything from anyone because they'll be that lack of willingness because we are

297 full of ourselves, we believe that we know it all, in the process we are limiting

298 ourselves in terms of learning new things. I think even if we can have enough

299 money, people will not come join us because we don't have *ubuntu*. By having

300 *ubuntu* as a couple, it opens doors for you, you build relationship with others so

301 there's quite a number of things that you learn.

302 **R4W:** I think in a marriage this term is off a very high value. Because I believe that

303 you cannot apply it correctly if in the process you are not willing to sometimes

304 forget yourself and the way that you feel. Because in life as a wife and a woman

305 who's staying with people who are new to me, I think my wish is to practice that

306 concept as much as possible. And in the process by letting people learn from me

307 as much as possible…in every situation that happens because most of the time

308 you get angry, challenges that happen when you are working and staying with

309 people…in the way that you respond and in the way that you deal with problems

310 and people, it's something that should always show up. When I'm saying you need

311 to forget yourself I mean that you should not always be driven by how you feel

312 because how you feel will always depend on the situations that happen and the

313 situations…the way that you interpret them, is not always correct, it's not always

314 how they are, so you realize later that 'no, I was wrong, I swore to everybody and

315 it was not actually the case'. So I think my approach and my wish is to be

316 someone who's more observant and more reserved in situations and then react or

317 address things when I'm sure of them…So it's actually being considerate with

318 people and not taking everything that people are doing and saying

319 seriously…because in life, people change as well, the person that was swearing at

320 you last week, this week is an angel. And you cannot do it on your own, you need

321 God's wisdom to be able to accept every negative thing and behave as if

322 everything is normal…So *ubuntu* is the wisdom of you know how to deal with life

323 and things and people and just letting God's principals to guide you…

Int: What would you say is the role of family/parents in a marriage?

324 **R4W:** For me I think the family helps with experience of things, they will obviously

325 know a lot of things that you're gonna need help with. They know because they've

326 already gone through that. Also, the advices, they things that they know that you

327 don't know. Let's say I'm having a child who is sick and I don't have experience of

328 taking care, they will obviously give advices with that. And also, I believe that it's

329 important to have a good relationship and work with the family in the things that

330 you do because sometimes you may feel that you don't need those people now

331 but you don't know what the future holds. And it's not always about money…most

332 of the things that we need is people showing us humanity, ubuntu towards us so

333 you can't easily get that if you are someone who is not counting on people and

334 considering other people's presence in your life. So I think the approach is to treat

335 the family members as important…because we don't stay with them all the time,

336 so if we are staying with them for a week just treat them good that time…it's not

337 like we're staying with these people a hundred percent of the time. So the role of

338 the family is very important because you can usually notice in people's homes

339   you'll find that if the brothers is having *umgcimbi* (event) everybody will be there

340   and if another brother is having the same thing three people will be there and his

341   friends. So it will be like now the family is choosing but it's about the way that you

342   treat them. Because even if they family might think that they don't want you as I'm

343   new in that family maybe they feel that I'm ugly, they just don't like me…but if I

344   treat them right and nice, my ugliness will just disappear and they will attend to the

345   way that I treat them. And that's how life will now go on between us.

346   **R4H:** I would say the role of a family in a marriage – they are there as a support

347   structure. A support structure is something that you can't…that you'll always refer

348   to for advice or guidance and for support, even financially sometimes. There are

349   things that you can't do on your own. At the same time even if you have money,

350   there are things that would need your poorest family member to do. So family is a

351   support structure.

Int: Genesis 2:24 says 'The man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife…' what is your understanding of this verse?

352   **R4W:** I think we are lucky because when we went to meet our marriage officer

353   before we got married, he quoted that verse and he said that it actually means you

354   should take your beds from your home and get your own place to live (laughs)

355   because you the husband needs to be the head in his own home and if he is not

356   leaving his home, there he will always be a child, there are heads of that home. So

357   that's how we understand it and that's how we're applying it. I think it helped me a

358   lot I never deeply thought about but when he spoke about it, it made sense and I

359   think that there a lot of marriages that end up failing because of that – they failed

360   to leave. It doesn't mean that…you should tell your heart that you've left, you must

361   leave physically (laughs) because if you do not leave, it's a problem – I will not

362   cook what I want to cook in the house of somebody else. You will not be the

363   person that you are supposed to be because you will still be under the rules, and

364   ways and preferences of that person who is heading that home...It's a problem

365   because you think that you're a family and you think that you should be making

366   other decisions yourself, but if you do not leave…so that's the understanding that

367   we have, that we took from the pastor that's what we're working on ourselves at

368   the moment. As early as possible, we want to be having our own place in the rural

369   areas that is far from the homes (laughs) so that we can't be fully independent in
370   the mind as well as physically.

371   **R4H:** My understanding is not different at all from that of hers. I think I did mention
372   it earlier that if you staying in a crowded place whereas there are people who
373   believe they are senior to you, it will always be difficult for you to be independent,
374   to make independent decisions. You will consult for everything. It limits one from
375   being independent, you can't grow, you can't apply your own mind. There's that
376   saying that when you are in Rome, do as the Romans do, you'll end up not
377   practicing your own wishes.

    Int: In your view, does this verse contradict or agree with what the concept of ubuntu
    means when it comes to marriage?

378   **R4W:** According to my understanding it doesn't at all depending on how you as a
379   person how are you managing yourself because the Bible doesn't say that you
380   must neglect your family or abandon your family but it says that you must move
381   from your mother and father and be united to your wife if you are a husband. If
382   someone is sick and wants to come to Gauteng from Eastern Cape to come and
383   attend the doctors this side and I'm here with a house, it's not a problem for me to
384   say they can come here so they can go to the hospital. Because it doesn't say that
385   you must abandon your family. And I'm thinking about a lot of Scriptures in the
386   Bible because there's a Scripture that says that you must treat your neighbour as
387   yourself. So if it says this it means you must to do more for your blood family…So
388   unless you will be somebody who is controlled by your family – you will get your
389   salary and they will list that these are the things that you must do (laughs) then
390   you are somebody else that I'm not talking about. But if you are independent in
391   decision making and you help where you can and where you want, not at the
392   expense of your own immediate family, you do what you can do for other people.
393   Then it's not contradicting because you'll be living your own life, deciding how
394   much you will be giving the people that you want to help. Its not contradicting if
395   you are independent and in charge of your decisions unless if it's my mother
396   telling me what to do…

397   **R4H:** From my side, there's an irony, instead of a contradiction, there's just an
398   irony about the two. By you leaving early it means you leave before things turn

399   sour, you're giving each other space to breath. It's an opportunity for one to have

400   his or her own time out of this crowd. So as she said, when the Bible says you

401   must leave, it doesn't mean you must abandon. You'll still have that good

402   relationship and what's nice when you're not staying together is that you will miss

403   each other. When you're staying together it's likely that there will always be those

404   misunderstandings, fights, one trying to be superior than the other, all those

405   things. So I think in a way, by leaving early it prevents those kinds of

406   misunderstandings and differences.

407   **R4W:** There's also that verse that says you must respect your mother and father

408   so that your days on earth will be multiplied. So it doesn't say that when you are

409   married now, they are no longer your mother and father and you must no longer

410   respect them. It's just to continue to honour them in a way that will not jeopardise

411   your plans or your immediate priorities. Especially if they are also understanding

412   the same way, I mean they are also Christians, they will know that you will not be

413   supporting them the same way as when you were single. So they cannot expect

414   that whatever you are eating, they should also be eating and those sort of things.

415   So it will never clash.

Appendix H

Interview transcript of Respondent 5 where R5W is the wife and R5H is the husband.

<u>Individual questions: R5W</u>

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

1 **R5W:** Okay, well for me it was very much different because we could say that I'm
2 adopted in away so I have parents who are not biologically my parents and then I
3 had family which is my mom's family - my mom passed on when I was a child. So
4 my mom's family would be my grandmother, my aunts and uncles so growing up it
5 wasn't really the best situation or set up so I disconnected with them when I went
6 to varsity. But when I had to get married my, my adoptive parents, they suggested
7 that we go back home and let them know that this is happening to avoid situations
8 where they feel like now I'm getting married, they getting money or whatever, so
9 we had to go back home. So going back home, we had to tell them 'okay, this is
10 what's happening' and we had a family meeting with everybody telling them what's
11 what, but there wasn't really anything that I wanted to hear from them as they
12 were not really a part of my life. But it was just to inform them out of respect and
13 let them know that this is what's happening. And the lobolo negotiations were held
14 at my family, my Grandma's house, who's my mom's mother - my father - out of
15 the picture, he's not there. So they were involved but more than anything I had the
16 privilege of doing everything the way I personally wanted to. So I, I can definitely
17 say that I controlled everything, even though everything didn't go as I had wanted
18 it to go because there are conflicts and everything. But more than anything, I think
19 I did the steering of how everything had to go.

Int: You're mentioning that they were involved in the lobolo negotiations…can you tell me more about that?

20 **R5W:** Well, they had to be part of the meeting discussing lobolo obviously, how
21 that was gonna go - what charging, so they had to do that. Yeah, I think that is as
22 far as it goes with them being involved, just being part of the meeting and then

23 obviously reporting back that this is how it went, this is what happened. The thing

24 is I don't really have a relationship with them for us to sit down and say, 'okay, this

25 is what we think' 'cause my husband and I already had an idea of what we

26 wanted, so entering this whole process, I knew what I wanted, I knew what had to

27 be done in a way that I thought was best for both my husband and I cause we'd

28 discussed it for quite a while. So them being involved was just being part of the

29 negotiations, representing the family, but I wouldn't say I have relationship with

30 them, not really, but they were just there as family representatives and doing

31 things the way that it had to be done basically, as far as negotiations go and there

32 was that.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's
involvement in your marriage process as you've outlined their involvement?

33 **R5W:** The bad of it was that they wanted the money which they were not gonna

34 get (laughs) 'Cause one they had… I remember I even had a fall out with my

35 grandmother because she just wanted everything for herself, especially when

36 people see cash they've never seen before. So we had a fall out for about 2 years.

37 I only started talking to her recently because I was so mad, you know. Because

38 you've never done anything, you've never been there - present, but now you want

39 to gain cause your daughter's daughter - your granddaughter is getting married.

40 So that was a bit of a disadvantage 'cause they wanted - I can say almost to an

41 extent for lack of a better word - they were trying to be selfish about the whole

42 thing. I remember when my uncle, when the lobolo negotiations was done, 'cause

43 I don't even live with them, but we had to go there out of their respects and advise

44 of my adoptive parents. My uncle started telling me the things that he needed and

45 the money that he needed. And I'm like 'how can you ask a child how much

46 money you need, like how could you do…? Well they are not, basically my uncle

47 drinks and everything so he's not really the best person of character or whatever

48 so you'd expected from him. But I was like, 'no, that's not gonna…I don't have

49 money and in any case, every money that was coming in was not even mine or

50 ours, it was gonna go towards our wedding 'cause that's how we had planned our

51 finances. So that was a bit of a disadvantage - them wanting things for

52 themselves. And also, like when people see money they change, you know. So

53 we had to have a lot of meetings about the money. Money that wasn't even ours

54   as well 'cause we decided that yes we're going to do lobolo the right way but all

55   that money is going towards our wedding so that we could have the wedding that

56   we want. So that was the disadvantage of having them because they wanted to do

57   things their way and then the advantage I'd say was that we did things the right

58   way. I involved them so they have no questions, none whatsoever that 'this child

59   got married without telling anyone, she eloped or we don't even know what's

60   happening' I think the advantage is that for us we started on a clean slate,

61   respecting everyone honoring anyone, even though it was hard to do that – I cried

62   so much during those days, but I think the advantage is just starting on a clean

63   slate without anyone pointing fingers at us or blaming us for doing things as kids,

64   even as much as we wanted what we wanted, and we knew what we wanted, but

65   we still gave them room to give them honor and respect. So I think that was just

66   the advantage.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

67   **R5W:** No, actually I think more than anything my parents didn't want me to get

68   married then (laughs) Obviously they wouldn't say 'don't get married'. 'Cause I got

69   married at 21, I was 21, so I was such a baby so they were scared that can I

70   handle it? What's gonna happen? 'Cause I'm from Durban my husband is from

71   Mpumalanga and they were wondering that how is my life gonna be, all those

72   things. So more than anything I think they were scared, but not a bad scared in a

73   way but like like any parent would be concerned. So in them influencing my

74   decision to get married, I think they were not ready for me to get married. So I

75   don't think they had any…obviously I knew that I was going to get married at some

76   point and my parents knew that, but the time it came, I think even I wasn't ready. I

77   was like 'wow, this is here, I wasn't even thinking about it.' So no, they didn't push

78   me to get married.

Int: Did you go ahead with them being scared, or did you maybe sit down and talk
about it?

79   **R5W:** My mom and I spoke about it - my dad not so much of a talker. And when

80   we spoke about it, she tried to understand if I understood what I was entering into

81   because being a wife is different from being a girlfriend or just being in courtship,

82   you know, it's different. So she did talk to me. I can say, prepare me in a way or

83   something... but you can never be fully prepared for marriage 'cause it's different.

84   She has her own experience and it's way different and they lived in different times.

85   When I got married my parents had been married for like 30 years so they were

86   married a long time ago. She did talk to me and help me understand that this is a

87   decision that I'm taking and also that after I make the decision there's no coming

88   back so I had to be sober and we are a prayerful family, so she prayed with me.

89   She prayed for me which she still does to date. So yeah I think she supported me

90   in that manner to try broaden my perspective of what I'm entering into because

91   once it's done it's done. 'Cause we're from a Christian background, so once you

92   take the decision to get married you have to be sober about it, at least from my

93   family. That's what we believe, so she helped me a lot.

Int: What was your parent's involvement in terms of who you chose to marry?

94   R5W: Listen! They didn't even know the guy - I didn't know the guy (laughs). I

95   knew my husband, by not knowing him I mean we didn't have like a childhood

96   relationship where we grew up together, went to the same school or even grew up

97   in the same town or neighbourhood - we didn't have that. I met him in 2015 at

98   church, at a big church convention and when we met it was really nothing. It was

99   like whatever, like you know, just two people meeting at church. Little did I know

100   that it's the person that I would marry. So we courted for like a year and a half or

101   something like that. So when he asked me, I knew the time we met on our first

102   date that I was gonna marry him but I didn't know that it was gonna be so soon.

103   So my family, no, they didn't have an influence over that. In fact, we didn't know

104   him. They didn't know him so it was totally my decision.

Int: Did they have any fears or reservations about that?

105   R5W: My older sister did. I have an older sister so she was very scared, especially

106   because I even got married before her 'cause my sister got married after me and

107   you would expect that she gets married first. So she was like 'I'm not sure you

108   know like what's gonna happen' and she's very protective of me. So, my sister,

109   yes she had reservations. Maybe my mom did but she didn't want to, you know,

110   show them to my face - I don't know. But they didn't know him so they didn't

111   influence me. No.

Int: After you were married and at present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

112 **R5W:** They are not involved hey, by that I mean that we're just living our life
113 separately from any decision that they might influence. Like no, they are not
114 involved. I'd say they're not involved at all, but obviously they care about our
115 wellbeing, how we're keeping and all those things. But in terms of us making
116 decisions for when are we having a baby, to how we use our finances. They're not
117 involved. So no, they are not involved at all, but they care about us and they are
118 aware of where we are at certain spaces in our lives. As to what's going on, are
119 we okay, how we're dealing whatever. But all the decisions - we make them.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families current involvement in your marriage?

120 **R5W:** The advantages of them not being involved, I think it gives us the the
121 freedom to become and make our marriage what we want it to be without trying to
122 impersonate - try to be like them because we're different homes in as much as I
123 bring the background from how they raised me or how they did things. How we do
124 things in our own household is very much different from what is done at home. So
125 that's the advantage, it's given us the freedom to become and shape our marriage
126 the way that we think is best for us and our family, which is my husband and I. So I
127 think that's advantage - for us to become. The disadvantage…actually I don't know
128 what I would say is disadvantage that because I really don't think I would want my
129 parents to influence my decisions when it comes to my marriage. Obviously I
130 learn, I take certain things and adopt certain things like 'okay, this is how my mom
131 does this and I love it.' For instance, typical example, each time I see how my
132 mom serves my dad with honor, with respect and I think I want to take that, so I
133 take that. So I don't know what disadvantages are but there's great advantages of
134 allowing us to become. Maybe making mistakes they would have avoided, maybe
135 that would be the disadvantage, or going through something because I didn't tell
136 them. I don't know, maybe that would be the disadvantage - repeating mistakes
137 that could have been avoided because I didn't say much.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

138   **R5W:** I think it's been good and the reason why I say that is because everywhere
139   we've learned in our journey of marriage, it has made us better people. And
140   everywhere we've had hardships, you know, it has brought us closer, it has made
141   us better people. So I think it has contributed positively in that manner in that we're
142   learning and we're growing and we're figuring it out together without certain
143   influences that are not supposed to be there, without them shaping how we look.
144   Obviously with a background of being raised in a certain home, shapes how you
145   think, even though it might not be direct but it shapes how you reason and how
146   you think of everything. But I think more than anything, it has helped us grow and
147   learn and seek God more, because sometimes we seek from people what we
148   should be seeking from God. I think it has helped us. Well other than that,
149   obviously I should mention that we have amazing mentors - our spiritual parents
150   who influence… who I'd say that they mostly influence how we do things more
151   than our biological parents.

Individual questions: R5H

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

152   **R5H:** So with my family involvement…I'm gonna share in a story format and then I
153   think you'll be able to get the information that you need. When I was to get married
154   it was actually a bit tough in terms of conversation because I was not too sure
155   where to start. I grew up in a Christian family, parents in ministry, leaders. So I
156   knew I was ready to get married, but I was not too sure how to go about with the
157   conversation. So this one day, I was still living at home, I think…this one day I
158   went and I'm like 'okay I think I'm ready to get married.' In fact my mother had
159   suspicions of some sort. I think one of the things that she figured was that I'm
160   going to get married. I don't know how she figured it out, maybe through prayer.
161   'Yeah, I think your visions, or whatever you're seeing is right' so that was how we
162   started the conversation and then 'who' and 'what'. This girl she's from Durban.
163   'Okay, what does it mean? We need to go that side. OK, what's the story? What's
164   the family like?' But their involvement was a matter of me informing them, they
165   were happy about it…so obviously my father was a bit more realistic. 'Are you

166 ready for it?' More finance more than anything. That was his response. Then
167 involvement from there…'okay, so this is this, so what needs to happen? Who's
168 who? Who do we need to mobilize now in terms of the lobola team?' That's where
169 we had to get extended family, get the uncles, so I'd already thought it through
170 that who do I want to represent me…because from my family side we close but
171 not too close. So we've got uncles but we don't live with them. I was trying to avoid
172 that part of getting people who I don't relate with as much. There's this one, Leak*
173 I had was a bit older so got him on board and then some of my uncles from my
174 mother's side. So the dialogue there as well, was a matter of we need to involve
175 all the families cause my mother side, my father side needs to be involved in the
176 process which I didn't see the need because we're not that close. Yeah, so that
177 was the involvement played from the family. If it answers the question.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's involvement in your marriage process?

178 **R5H:** Um, the good of it I think was perspective…having that old voice that
179 speaks to 'did you check this gift? Do you have gifts? Where are we going? What
180 type of family are we going to? How are we representing ourselves as a family?
181 So the perspective I think, was very important in terms of their involvement
182 advantages. Funny enough, their involvement was not as though they are taking
183 over the show just only got complicated when it was the wedding planning process
184 more than the actual marriage, which I think is the question you asking. It was
185 more perspective, I think the advantages, involvement of them was perspective of
186 being able to assist…'this needs to be done. What would you like? Who needs to
187 be there? How is the family getting there?' Because we didn't have as much
188 interaction with the different families because of the distance. I think it was maybe
189 when we went for the lobolo, but there it was just one car and then went for the
190 engagement and that's where the families met and then it was the wedding. So
191 there was not that much interaction and engagement. But the perspective, I think
192 that perspective one of the other things maybe was the advantage of the family,
193 specially the parents part - being able to connect at that level which made it easier
194 for us to contain and keep everything within the inner circle of family…I don't think
195 there was a disadvantage because they were not, uh…I think I knew what I
196 wanted and they're very supportive. What I did, which is totally unrelated to this,

197   but I had a beautiful graduation party, so part of that was quote-and-quote in my

198   mind my mini wedding, so I was trying to figure out what I wanted and working

199   with them there, I think they actually began to see that 'okay, he actually knows

200   what he wants'. So they actually showed confidence for one's decision-making

201   even with the lady that I chose, and the family. So I think it was that level of

202   maturity that they believed. And again another tricky thing was I was the first one

203   getting married at home so there was that part of 'we're not too sure', 'what does

204   it mean' - everyone is learning, which is the funny thing. I think it was different with

205   my brother because with me everyone is learning, so we're not too sure. 'Oh wow,

206   we're hosting a wedding, what does it mean? How do we prepare? So there was a

207   lot of learning, yeah, so there's no specific disadvantage maybe to come back to

208   your question that I can point to and say that was a disadvantage.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

209   **R5H:** Uh, no they didn't, no they didn't. No, no, no. They actually didn't. I don't

210   think there was a matter of influence 'cause I think I'd made up my mind. In fact it

211   came off as a surprise to them that 'okay, you actually want to get married…oh the

212   Lady…So our family we're a Christian family so...within a Christian family we're

213   not as open...I'm not sure if to say Christian or cultural…but there are certain

214   families in a space where there's no room for being open about relationships, to

215   say that you're dating someone and stuff, you come up when you're saying you're

216   getting married especially when it's within the confines of church. So it was more a

217   matter of shock, 'okay, so you actually getting married. Who's the lady?' And then

218   yeah, so there was no influence like 'get married to this one, not this one.' There

219   was more embracing the decision more than anything. Nothing.

Int: What was your parent's involvement in terms of who you chose to marry?

220   **R5H:** Yeah, so I think (laughs) the comments more from the uncles, which was so

221   funny 'cause when they were driving to Hammersdale was a matter of 'do you

222   mean there aren't any women nearby cause you leave Pretoria and have to drive

223   all the way to Durban to go find a wife.' Which was very ironic…in fact for them

224   because they aren't born-again…it was a matter of 'you don't know this person,

225   how do you meet someone you don't know and get married to them'. It was a

226   different school of thought because most of them are not saved. So that was

227 mostly from the external but I think they liked her from the pictures because
228 there's really not a lot that they could say because they don't know her. So it was
229 just a matter of seeing the pictures and then just loving the person that they see
230 from the picture and also another important thing maybe to emphasize on my side
231 was how I portrayed her to them as to who she is and what she does. And I think
232 that's what made it easy for them to embrace her.

Int: After you got married and at present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

233 **R5H:** I would say initially, because one of the things that we did when we left
234 home, we tried not to stay home for the longest of time, so we were there because
235 of this concept of 'ukukotiza' and stuff, which is something we did not believe
236 in…of doing it traditionally and stuff. It was just being there just to familiarize and
237 ingratiate ourselves with the families. So I think we were home for about just two
238 weeks if I'm not mistaken. Yeah, end of July I think was when we moved out so we
239 didn't have as much time with the family. Their influence was a bit minimal in
240 terms of the daily interactions and what we do in our marriage and speaking into
241 their marriage. So an expectation would be maybe, as you say, obviously being a
242 son, and I think one of the things which I mentioned as well, growing up at home,
243 being at home my whole life. So I'm having to move away and detach was a bit,
244 not a bit tricky, it was actually, it was an interesting transition because I think they
245 were not too 'when are you coming back, when are you coming home?' I think,
246 and as I said earlier, it's a matter of being the first marriage. So everyone I think
247 was trying to figure out so there was really no demand of 'come back home, this is
248 what we want from you'. It was just us who would go home, be there because
249 we've been there for the longest of times, especially in the initial stages, just to go
250 check, fetch stuff etc etc. But speaking to the marriage and demands, there's
251 really not a lot of that, I think, because obviously in the spiritual background and
252 the spiritual maturity, there's no… it's really rare where they would say 'do this for
253 us. We want this, etc etc.' Yeah, so the involvement, maybe to answer your
254 question directly from then to presently it's more relational more than anything, it's
255 more a parent-child…'are you guys keeping? Are you guys good? No we good,
256 what's happening?' Recently though it's getting a bit more strong again because
257 my father is not feeling well currently so I'm doing a lot of going back home and

258   assisting and being there. My wife is going here and there just to assist with

259   cooking... So it's more relational more than transactional. If it makes sense.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families current involvement in your marriage?

260   **R5H:** So with the good, I think it keeps us in check. I think one of the things is

261   specially 'cause we're talking from is Christian spiritual background. With my

262   mother, she's so funny because I think to a certain extent she doesn't know how to

263   connect but she tries to connect. Every time she calls 'are y'all alright?' and I'm

264   like 'no we're fine'…most of the time that's why she'll call if we haven't spoken in a

265   while…'are y'all alright?' 'no, we're fine.'…she just wants to check up. So having

266   that room of care and stuff… sometimes she's like 'we bought 1,2,3 come and

267   fetch' so it's more that room of relationship, which is an advantage and having that

268   space within family. Even with the siblings here and there just checking, helping

269   each other out with what needs to be done…I've got a younger brother so 'please

270   fetch him and bring him home…this is what's needed.' At this stage there's

271   nothing that comes to mind that I would say that…maybe on my side a

272   disadvantage would be maybe sometimes wanting to spend a lot of time with

273   them, maybe for a longest of time I haven't spent time and I like actually would like

274   to go and just be there…just having to juggle that, especially between family and

275   other things. But that is me being disadvantaged of not investing as much time

276   that I would want to, I think since they're not too far away from where we stay, but

277   just being there. But as I mentioned that now, it's actually happening automatically

278   because I have to be there.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

279   **R5H:** I would say it's positively added towards our marriage. I don't think there's a

280   negative that I can point to. I think it's more positive than anything. Just having that

281   relational, I think just having that good relationship so that it's not an awkward

282   space of having to go home, dreading to go home. Yeah, there's no 'I don't feel

283   like going' I don't want, no. I'd say it's positive more than negative.

Int: You've mentioned in the first section that you did ilobolo…which other cultural acts/ceremonies did you have to perform as part of the marriage process (e.g. payment of ilobolo)?

284 **R5W:** That's all we did as far as culture is concerned. We didn't do your
285 *membeso*, your *memulo*, we didn't do any of those things…we're not into those
286 things, no. And we didn't see a need, especially we thought of it financially more
287 than anything. So we did nothing except for lobolo.

288 **R5H:** Yeah, just to speak to what she spoke of that it's only ilobolo then the gift
289 part I think we didn't do the formal traditional *umabo* and stuff and I think she had
290 mentioned that there was something like that that was supposed to happen in
291 terms of exchanging of gifts. Where there was a list from her family to our family,
292 which has a huge list with a lot of expensive things, but then we had to
293 conversate…so we sat down and figured 'okay, as Christians, what does it mean
294 for us? What do…especially who's who? Who are we buying them for? Let's
295 rather honour those who are important. So the Christian thought and ethos dealt
296 with that. That's when we were like, 'okay' I think she bought her grandmother a
297 dress or something like that.

298 **R5W:** And she got money (laughs)

299 **R5H:** And she got money. So we streamlined the whole process. We honored and
300 gave gifts to those who deemed was supposed to get the gifts, but it was not done
301 within the traditional context. And yes, because of our Christian belief.

302 **R5W:** And also it didn't make financial sense. It didn't

303 **R5H:** Yeah it didn't, it really didn't it, the list that they gave-

304 **R5W:** We were thinking so much ahead, like what will happen after the wedding
305 day more than now. I think that's how we were wired and we are wired, that does it
306 make financial sense? Who is getting the gift? Why are they getting the gift?

Int: What is your understanding of *ilobolo*?

307 **R5W:** I think lobolo for us, I don't even wanna say black people just to put
308 everyone under that umbrella whether you're Xhosa or Sotho. I think it's just

309 honouring the parents of the person that you marrying, not the parents per say,
310 but just honouring 'cause that's how we're raised in honour, in respect. To say
311 'now I would love to have this person come to our family, this is our honour to
312 you. To thank you for raising them right, to thank you for, you know, for everything,
313 raising up a good child for us now to adopt into our family'. So I think more than
314 anything it is to honor, but you know, I have a…I'm just thinking of an
315 anthropological perspective that I have about it when we once had this debate in
316 school, in University, about how it was a system to stop black people from
317 marrying each other because now they putting a price to it and they know that it's
318 expensive so it's going to prevent us from building our own families because of
319 slavery and then wanting... so I I'm just thinking about all those things in mind. But
320 more than anything in what I understand growing up, it's just a way of honouring
321 and respecting and acknowledging parents more than anything cause you can't
322 just pick someone and then now you're married, like black people don't do that
323 unless you're rebellious. Or unless you're cast* within a family because we have
324 different views about certain things.

325 **R5H:** Yeah, I think I would say as well that it's more a ceremony or if it's a
326 ceremony, but it's an act that is meant to bring together families and combine
327 families from the different walks of life. So it's where the different families come
328 together and the family that is marrying into the other gets to know the other family
329 and as a sign of respect and honour. There's a gift which is obviously money that
330 is left with the other family. But I'd view it as, I'd explain it beyond the money not to
331 highlight the money part or…I'd say it's more an exchange and introduction of
332 families where they come together. Then there's an exchange of a gift which is
333 money for them but more that exchange and getting together of the families.
334 Because like we meet together and it's only us, but we now bringing together
335 where she comes from where I come from so that they know each other and we're
336 joining that journey together.

Int: What are your views about ilobolo?

337 **R5H:** I think me with iloblolo- okay and I also think it depends where you are.
338 When you still want to get married, you don't want lobolo because you feel like
339 this thing is holding me back, I wanna marry this person…why do they want my

340 money. But after I got through it, this is my view, I'm glad you mentioned it, it gives
341 you a different perspective of the person that you're marrying. One, it places a
342 demand on you of raising money, going through certain measures to get your
343 family together to be involved in the process. So I'm all for what it teaches and
344 what it facilitates more than the money part. The whole journey I think is a
345 beautiful one that is necessary within the marriage journey because what it does
346 for me as someone wants to get married, I need to save up. I need to figure
347 out…and having this anxiety of not being too sure that how much are they going to
348 charge me. Which is an interesting thing because you like OK… and it's much
349 beyond how much she's worth but again it tests how much are you willing to pay
350 because to a certain extent you want to negotiate based on what you have but at
351 the same time, like 'I love this person so much and I can see that even the money
352 they are requesting is not actually worth who she is but it's pulling me to want to
353 pay for it. So it gives you that thing, and now I'm talking for myself, and also that
354 pride quote and quote that maybe others would speak off that says 'OK I actually
355 worked towards getting her, not that I bought her but I've laboured for her, I've
356 laboured to accumulate what was needed for me - it gives you that sense of pride,
357 I think which is important because I think if I just got her for free, that sense of
358 pride - I'll still be thinking I'm dating. I think that's what separates dating and
359 marriage.

360 **R5W:** Well I think for me, eish I'm conflicted (laughs). I think I agree with my
361 husband. I just love how he put it. Because you have to show commitment, you
362 know, and a level of responsibility 'cause when you just get married to someone
363 and they never did anything, I think it would make me wonder what would they
364 ever do for me say now they had to do something if everything for them was so
365 easy. So more than anything I wouldn't really just wreck down the walls of what
366 ilobolo means and just shun it like that. I think it's important, especially with
367 bringing the families together because it brings that sense of respect for families
368 because in as much as, especially for our experience, we're just our own people,
369 we're living our lives without our parents, you know, having too many opinions,
370 which is a gift you know for that 'cause some people can be very different. So
371 having that done, which is lobolo in this case, it gives our families respect for one
372 another, so it's not something that we doing for ourselves, but it's to acknowledge,

373 especially as African children, that we are children, we come from homes, we

374 come from somewhere. It might not be the best homes, especially for my case, but

375 it is to say we honour, we respect. It doesn't matter how you brought me up, I still

376 respect you because I'm a child. Yes, some of the things you did to me I didn't

377 deserve them but I acknowledge that I'm a child and acknowledging that, say that

378 even as Christians we are taught honour in the Bible, we are taught respect. So

379 our values are not so, you know, detangled from what the Bible says. I don't, know

380 if it's biblical but I would say that it goes with certain values that we take from

381 there. So I think I am a thousand percent for lobolo. I think it's important, just that I

382 think some people can be greedy and selfish. Like why would you charge R50000

383 for this, you know, but that's when we strip the value of what it means and try to

384 make it serve us the way that we want it to. But lobolo as a system, or as an event

385 or whatever, I think it's important, it brings dignity especially for us women as well,

386 it gives us dignity to say, 'OK, this guy, you know, he means business. I feel

387 respected, I feel honoured, I feel valued in as much as you can't put a price to me

388 as a person but the fact that you are doing this, I really, it gives me an indignity

389 and value.' So I think it's important.

390 **R5H:** I think, also, maybe to- I love your perspective *(makes eye contact with*

391 *wife)* you can hear her passion in her voice -the accountability part as well that it

392 brings in the family structure, so that accountability from family to family. I think it

393 also brings that towards the whole relationship.

Int: What is your understanding of ubuntu as expressed in the phrase *'umuntu*
ngumuntu ngabantu'?

394 **R5H**: I think it would speak to how the community raises child and how the

395 community contributes towards-

396 **R5W:** It takes a village.

397 **R5H:** Yeah, it takes it takes the community or a village to raise a child and how

398 your community and the people around you contribute to the person that you

399 become. The relationships that you have around you inform the quality and the

400 direction of your life. So it speaks to the quality that you are because of the

401 relationships that you have or that you had within your community, be it in the

402 schooling community, in the neighbourhood where you grew up, the church

255

403   community, whichever sphere of life that you've been part of. And so I would

404   explain it to someone else as to how to - it's more observing the contribution of the

405   people and the relationships that have poured into the person that you are.

406   **R5W:** Yeah, I love that and I agree to it because I'm thinking of how as black

407   children, you know, you don't belong to your family, you belong to the whole

408   community, especially in as much as we're young but we have that privilege of

409   growing up in that way where if you do something wrong and aunt who lives five

410   houses away from you can still hit you, you know. As much as we still not that old,

411   but we still grew up that way, at least for me, I don't know about my husband,

412   where you belong to the whole-if you try to do something naughty and someone

413   else who lives next to your home, you know you're in trouble because they're

414   gonna tell on you... So this phrase is a means of saying we belong to one another,

415   not belong per say, but we are for each other, we need each other, you know you

416   can't do life alone, you wouldn't survive in isolation. That is why it's important to be

417   one and us African kids if you live in a good neighborhood that shares those

418   values, we are very fortunate, you know, because I get from that other person

419   what I wouldn't get here at home and the kid from next door gets here at my home

420   what they wouldn't get at their home. So we are one, you know. It means unity for

421   me more than anything, to say we are in this together and we will do this together

422   that's what it means.

Int: What would you say *ubuntu* mean for marriage in particular?

423   **R5H:** So I would say the relationships around you have a bearing as well towards

424   your marriage. So for example, I'll take the community of faith, our spiritual

425   parents. It's a relationship that contributes to us and us becoming better. Growing

426   up in Church seeing other couples. For example in the different church where I

427   grew up, Assemblies of God, they would have *inkonzo zomama (services for*

428   *mothers/wives), inkonzo zobaba (services fathers/husbands), inkonzo zey'ntombi*

429   (*services for young women*)…all these different services would contribute towards

430   an individual. For example i*nkonzo zey'ntombi* would contribute towards raising a

431   girl child so that they know what's expected and how they ought to carry

432   themselves within the confinements of marriage. And then they would have on

433   Thursdays services for *omama* who are married and those services would

434 practically equip *omama* how to serve, cook, how to wash, how to-all these
435 different basic and practical things that they would teach. *Inkonzo zamadoda*
436 (*men's services*) as well they teach what it means to be a man. So I think within
437 the space of marriage I would say this adage has a direct bearing because it
438 speaks to how individually we are a result of the relationships that we have, that
439 pour into who we are. Relationships spiritually,as we mentioned our spiritual
440 parents, people we associated with and being very intentional about what they
441 feed into.

442 **R5W:** I think how we are raised, especially because we have the same church
443 background 'cause we grew up in the same church, different locations but the
444 same church which is Assemblies of God in this instance. And I think the person
445 that I am today and the most-the values that I hold dear to are values that I
446 learned then through that system, you know, of church of having services catered
447 to us as children. So I think it contributes a lot to who we become when we are
448 married. In as much as becoming a different person than what my teacher in
449 Sunday School would be trying to shape me as but as much as I won't come up as
450 that direct product, you know, but it contributes to who I am. The way I respect and
451 honour my husband, probably is something I learned at church that this is how you
452 honour 'cause we can't figure everything out on our own. You are not your own
453 person and you are combination of your experiences and the things that you've
454 been through and how you've been taught and how you grew up, I think it makes
455 us good husbands, that we become the good wives that we become. I think they
456 contributed-and like I was saying in terms of discipline, in terms of respect and
457 value, which are values that are very important in a marriage. I think you learn
458 those a lot and more specially for us from my spiritual parents. It contributes alot to
459 who we become. I think we are some of that one way or another.

Int: What would you say is the role of family/parents in a marriage?

460 **R5W:** I think the role of parents is to guide. I think it is to give guidance and also it
461 is to love, it is to protect 'cause sometimes they have to protect you from yourself.
462 It is to protect and I would also say yeah basically it is that, to guide to love, to
463 protect and to be there for you as well because you don't stop being your parents
464 just because you married. Like I still need my mom, you know, I may not need her

465   for things I needed her for when I was a teenager, but when something happens

466   the first person that I want to call is my mom…So I think it's a guide, to love, to

467   protect, to be there for us, but not for them to control and tell us what to do or how

468   to do it but just add that 'think this way it could be better'. Why? Because they've

469   walked journey before. Like my husband would always say, we get borrowed

470   experience from them. So I already know what a marriage looks like 30 years into

471   it because of how my parents have lived. And then from that journey I can pick

472   that this is what I want, this is what I don't want. It is to learn from them, it is for

473   them to guide us and when you give direction is not like you driving like 'OK, go in

474   this road' but you are guiding so it's different from telling this is what you should be

475   doing. So I think the role of parents is to do that to guide and also just help us not

476   make the same mistakes they made and to just help us. So I think that's the role

477   they play.

478   **R5H:** I think, I'm actually just trying to think as well because I'm sure the question

479   more speaks to the role of family present in marriage. It is within the confinements

480   of marriage. So I would say it's three things that are coming to mind, so one would

481   be the relational nutrients that they give…that sense of belonging, because

482   marriage doesn't isolate you. So you need that sense of belonging so that, even

483   though you you've got this but you've got this because of that. So that belonging,

484   that relational knowing that I'm not my own. Yes, we're building our own house,

485   but I've got home and within home, it's just a big happy family. Either we're

486   growing or building whatever that we're building, but the relational nutrients in that

487   sense of community, I think, is very key and important. And it goes both ways,

488   because sometimes I think it might be what we need from them, but also what

489   they need from us, which I think is very key. They contributed to who we are, but

490   also within marriage we to contribute to who they are because our growth that our

491   progress speaks back to them, which goes back to what you were saying, umuntu

492   ngumuntu ngabantu. I think my wife mentioned that the community even

493   celebrates someone's success and victory as a community victory. Because the

494   contributed towards that particular individual, and I think it's just even within

495   marriage because when we succeed they get happy so that isolation is dangerous

496   we need to be together so that they can see how that 'you guys are doing well,

497   you're being blessed…I think it gives them a sense of joy and pride that 'we've

498   actually done our role and we've contributed to who they are.' And then the

499   second thought would be how they give us perspective…They put thought where

500   we can't put thought, so they help us think they, they think for us especially

501   because we are here, but as my wife mentioned, they are ahead in terms of

502   experience…So they give us borrowed thought or perspective. They give us a

503   certain lens of viewing things that we have to- so we can either learn through

504   mistakes and failures, or we can learn through the relationships that we have and

505   family are the first relationship where we can learn instead of making certain

506   mistakes but through conversations to learn. The third part would be a support

507   structure. They become that support system, especially when going through life,

508   marriage life, dealing with certain things, not too sure what to do. You've got that

509   sounding board that you have within family, that support structure when starting

510   out, you know, am I doing it right? Am I a good husband? a good wife? Especially

511   when you're starting out. We need this. What do I prioritize? You not too sure and

512   then remember one of these stories that my mother…most of the guys who are

513   married because we see them now, but when they began to take you back as to

514   where they started, some in shacks, others not having a bed. Then it would give

515   you a bit of perspective that okay it actually makes sense, what we're going

516   through is what they went through, but if they are where they are it means we can

517   also get there. So it gives you that support structure, which I think is important.

Int: Genesis 2:24 says 'The man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife…' what is your understanding of this verse?

518   **R5H:** So it speaks of, I don't wanna use disconnect, but it speaks off moving away

519   from a relationship that you've always known…It's not leaving your family, but it's

520   going to your new family. There's not a matter of me packing up and say, OK-

521   **R5W:** Abandon

522   **R5H:** Abandon yeah. Yeah, so it's not abandoning them…it's progression. It's like

523   being in high school your whole life, not your whole life, but studying and growing

524   until you get to grade twelve then you have this knowledge that you've

525   accumulated and you love your teachers and you love your school. Worse you're

526   head boy. If you are a special child, an only child then you've got all these

527   privileges, but now you are leaving high school to go to tertiary not because you

528 are burning the high school because it didn't help you, but you are leaving it
529 because it contributed to you being able to gain access to varsity where you are
530 able to study and be better and it needs a different mind for you to be able to - you
531 need the knowledge that you got here at high school, but this side at varsity it's
532 different. Different lecturers, different classes, no longer wearing uniform, different
533 routine, I'm no longer a child, I'm a leader. So…that's what I think it means to me
534 where you actually get up, go to varsity. So I'm leaving my family, they've been
535 good to me, they've taught me what I know and acquired all that I acquired and I'm
536 gonna use what they taught me. But I'm starting now a higher level of learning.
537 Yeah, so that's what I would say it means to me.

538 **R5W:** OK, the leaving and cleaving. I think when the man leaves his mother and
539 father and now cleaving to his wife, I think for me it means more than anything, it's
540 a shift of prioritized commitment if I may. So that I don't say you're shifting
541 commitment from your parents now that you're married. Your parents still need
542 you, but now it's just that it's a matter of the priority of commitment, 'cause now it
543 means that my husband is more committed to me than he is to his parents. Even
544 as though that sounds a bit ur, but for me, that's the reality of what it means to say
545 now this is the first commitment before any other commitment that you might have
546 and which I think, we don't have kids yet, but I would expect my husband to be
547 more committed to me than he is to our children 'cause I'm his wife. So that for me
548 means this is first. This is where we are cleaving, where we're holding onto more
549 than you are to the other parts. But like I said, it's prioritized commitment, 'cause it
550 doesn't mean you are not committed to the other parts, so I think that's what it
551 means for me.

Int: In your view, does this verse contradict or agree with what the concept of ubuntu
means when it comes to marriage?

552 **R5W:** OK, I think for me personally perspective is very important because I think
553 that's where that would come in and speak perfectly that it's how you look at it.
554 You can either look at it as a contradiction or you can either look at it as something
555 that supports that. Because it's different whether we take perspective in terms of
556 do we take the Bible literally that it's saying leave cleave so we packing bags,
557 we're moving or it's a matter of what I termed as prioritized commitment of what

that means. So it depends on how you look at it. So personally, I would say it complements it. Why I say that would be, umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu, I can't now cleave to someone and forget where I come from. How I would look at it, it supports it in a way that yes, I'm leaving and cleaving and this is my first priority but it doesn't- cause I don't think God would ever give-God says that we should respect and honour our parents because it adds days to our lives. So the Bible wouldn't contradict itself in that way that now you leave, you just shut the door. You don't do that because you can't be burning bridges that you might need to cross again at some point. Cause parents we need them and that even could be situational that 'cause not all African people live like those missionaries might have seen it. It's different. You can't take one experience and generalize that 'oh so this is what it means for Africans to be umuntu ngubuntu ngabantu type of thing. So I think it's a matter of perspective of how you look at it and how you see it. So for me like I'm saying, that I think it supports it 'cause we don't shut the door behind us. You don't shut a door you might need at some point. So we need one another, we love one another, that's how we are raised and I think for us that is perfect. It might not be perfect for a Caucasian person because that's not how they're raised but for us that system works, it's perfect and it is a rigid system that cannot be broken, you know. We are our families, our families are us.

R5H: The first thought I was having is that of a man shall leave his father and mother, which speaks of what gave birth to you. So your mother and father they gave birth to you. And cleave to his wife. So wife is something that is being born for example, it's a relationship that's starting…I would say doing life together is very important so I wouldn't say it when it comes to Genesis 2 which we spoke of leaving and cleaving, I think it's something that is more perspective as my wife said more than the literal leaving 'cause I don't think anyone can be isolated and left by themselves cause we need each other. So you can't literally say I'm leaving my mother, I'm leaving my father unless you relocating for whatever reason, but even there, you gonna need relationships, over the phone whatever, however. So I'm against that notion of you that you just leave you, disconnect and you just focus on your wife alone…

Appendix I

Interview transcript of Respondent 6 where R6W is the wife and R6H is the husband.

Individual questions: R6H

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

1   **R6H:** First of all on my side…I live with my aunts because my parents passed
2   away, so I first made it known to my aunts. From there my aunts informed me how
3   the lobolo process goes, they told me I had to write a letter and send it to the
4   bride's home. So I wrote the letter and sent it and they responded with when I
5   should come. When I told my aunts I also told my brothers and my uncles and
6   from there the letter was written and sent. When we met with my aunts - on my
7   side, I wasn't that much involved because they were running the whole process -
8   what they did is that they met with my uncles and asked me how I'm standing
9   money wise, how much money do I want to appear with. And from there, they put
10   together the money and went, it was just my uncles and brother who went to take
11   the money there. From there they spoke about…you know how it goes at lobolo
12   negotiations…they spoke about how much money they expect. From there, on the
13   last day when I paid the last money…I think my brothers came together and the
14   contribution made there was my brother bought a cow and they took the cow there
15   together with money. That's when all the families came together. It was my aunts,
16   my siblings and even like my friends. We went to the bride's home where we sang.
17   Almost my whole family was present during the entire process because I had let
18   everyone know what was going on. So we hired a taxi and we were all together in
19   the taxi when we went there…It was fun…We sang as we approached the gate
20   and stood and waited at the gate because they need to come out and welcome us
21   properly. So we stood singing at the gate and from there my in-laws came out to
22   us at the gate and welcomed us. The way they welcomed us was something else.
23   Many people thought it was the wedding already but we were just concluding the
24   lobolo negotiations. It looked like a wedding because of all the decorations. We
25   were amazed, it felt like a wedding, like I could just take my wife to go with me

26 already. When we were concluding the negotiations, they asked us about the

27 date, 'when are you guys planning to get married?' so we settled the issue of the

28 date. The families were then introduced to each other…and they explained to us

29 what we were entering into and what is expected from us, our behaviours. So both

30 families were giving us advice. This was in October and we got married in

31 December. The day after the negotiations we had an engagement service at

32 church…my whole family attended. Then it was the wedding. Me and my wife had

33 planned that we would only get married on one day. When we planned this, we

34 planned to have the white wedding and the traditional wedding on the same day.

35 But my family said no, it won't be possible. I don't know if it was because of the

36 support they had given me. They decided that they would make a plan and try that

37 there be something that happens on their side, at my home. I was the first person

38 to get married at home, so they said such a thing can't happen. So they said

39 they'd organize something for Sunday. My cousins put things together and split

40 responsibilities – okay, at my wedding, the way they were involved, I don't

41 remember spending anything on my side. I think I only paid a thousand or

42 something, even there it was money to add meat. But in the process, the issues of

43 vegetables, tents – even my friends organized and paid for the tents and chairs.

44 My cousins decorated. That's how Sunday was. Their support was from the lobolo

45 negotiations till the wedding.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's involvement in your marriage process?

46 **R6H:** I think the advantages is that…during the process you do feel that you don't

47 have enough strength, so their involvement gave me encouragement. And their

48 support encouraged me to face the day. Because there were times where I worry

49 about the issue of money, that I will lack, but their involvement even helped me

50 financially. I know that I can depend on them financially with some things. The

51 burden that I would have to organize everything, they removed that burden. I think

52 the disadvantage was that some of them during the whole process they forget that

53 this is my wedding. Some of them just want to take over, they want things to be

54 done their way. Them contributing money led to them wanting to control – okay,

55 even if they don't say it but there's that thing that 'we contributed money so we

56 want things to be done our way.' They wanted to sort of take over. Another

57 disadvantage was that, at my home, you know how elders can be. At some point

58 they want to introduce the issue of ancestors, so I had to stand firm…I remember

59 when we had to leave home, one aunt of mine said that 'in order for my marriage

60 to work properly, the bride has to be reported to the ancestors, because if the

61 bride isn't reported, you wont have peace in your marriage because the ancestors

62 don't know her. They'll always be fights, so you have to go to the ancestors and

63 report to them so that they can accept her because you can't stay with someone

64 who has not being accepted by the ancestors.' All those things that they wanted to

65 introduce… I told some of them that I'm Christian and can't do certain things. But

66 this one aunt of mine insisted, so my eldest aunt, she has respect for me, so I

67 called her and asked her to speak to my other aunts and tell them that we don't

68 those things here, this is my wedding and I don't want many things involved so

69 please stop her. The reason why I did that is that I didn't want us to have an

70 exchange of words, I was avoiding that. So the situation was calm after she spoke

71 to her.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

72 **R6H:** On my side there were comments about my age but what helped me on my

73 side, was having a good relationship with God. Cause you know when you're in a

74 relationship with God what kind of process you are in, where you are in life with

75 God. There were voices, even from neighbours and at home. 'Get married, you're

76 a good boy, we've never seen a girl here.' So there were those voices but I didn't

77 get married because of that pressure, I got married because of God's timing. At

78 some point they were telling me about girls who were right for me but all those

79 voices – because of my relationship with God, it caused me to not be in a rush

80 when I made some decisions.

Int: What was your parent's involvement, influence or comment in terms of who you chose to marry?

81 **R6H:** Their reception of my wife was not the same. One of my cousins is close

82 with my wife so she approved her. So she's the one who told my aunts about her

83 and about the background she comes from. So at home they had this thing of

84 worrying if I'd be able to handle someone of her background. But because I knew

85 her, she's not someone who's too demanding, that made me comfortable. I

86   studied her, she wasn't forward or a liker of things. My nieces and nephews were

87   concerned because she has a strong personality, 'hey this person will control you

88   (laughs) she'll say jump and you'll say how high. Will you be able to handle her?'

89   But I was so calm. I think what makes you okay, if you know your position as a

90   man, not a position of controlling, but if you'd had that walk with God and God

91   gave you the right identity, who you are as a man, then you stick to that identity

92   that God gave you and build whatever you build on that. I think that makes you

93   calm. I think as a man you can marry anyone because you're clear about your

94   identity, you aren't intimidated, you're calm…So at home there were those talks,

95   but I think what helped me is my walk with the Lord which caused me to able to

96   place these voices right.

Int: At present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

97   **R6H:** On my side, the way my family is involved, it's just calling one another now

98   and then. Sometimes my sisters will come this side to visit, and we'll also go there

99   to visit them and see my aunts. People who are more involved is from my wife's

100   side…they often come here since it's close. So that's how they're involved. I don't

101   think my family is involved in our decision-making. Okay, what helped us was

102   when we were going to get married…they were times when my mother in law

103   would not understand that it was not her wedding, she has the tendency of

104   domineering…other things I don't speak about them but what I liked is that my wife

105   knows how to draw a line, so she started it before we got married. But I would tell

106   her that there are things that I do not expect myself to do in your family like

107   drawing lines for them, I'm expecting you to play that role…so she started it then. I

108   remember she was telling me this one time the came here at our home, I don't

109   know how she had set the couches (laughs) so when she got her she complained

110   about how the couches were set (laughs) so she had to tell her that she couldn't

111   do that… She's just that type but what I like is that my wife always reminds her in

112   a respectful way. Me on the other hand, I grew up having to make my own

113   decisions…at home they would usually come to me and ask how things should be

114   done…for me it's just to inform them on what I'm planning to do and if they have

115   input they advise me but in most cases I make decisions and inform them and

116   they advise me where they want to advise me. They haven't tried to control things.

117   My sisters know, if they want to visit, they don't talk to me, they call my wife. Even

118   when they need something, they don't ask me because they know I live with

119   someone so they go via her.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families current involvement in your marriage?

120   **R6H:** The more I continue I see it disadvantages me cause when I was growing

121   up, I think the issue of family, what kind of family you come from is important

122   because what kind of family you come from helps you in what kind of family you'll

123   build…So because I come from a family where there were no parents, there

124   wasn't anything stable, we took care of ourselves as kids. So them not being

125   involved, and I can't blame them much because even if they are to be involved,

126   what will they be involved with when it comes to building a family because we

127   grew up with them, they don't know how to build up that family. So me demanding

128   them to be involved won't help with anything…There are families that I visited –

129   well it may seem that you're fragmented, because you take here and there, the

130   good things especially since in your background those things weren't there. So I'd

131   visit families who invited me to stay in their homes, so I was able to pick some

132   things up from the good things they did and was set to use them to build my own

133   with them. As the zulu proverb says, a bird builds it's nest with another bird's

134   feathers. Some of it works for me, but at times there is that wish that I wish my

135   parents were present at home…not having that is a disadvantage. My wife comes

136   from a good family so at times there's that thing that I rely on her.

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

137   **R6H:** Okay, with her family, there were times – I thought I was the only one with

138   the problem, there were times where it seems were going to her home too

139   frequently. So sometimes I'd feel like a *sbari-makoti* (a son-in-law who acts like a

140   daughter in law) (laughs)…So I'd ask my mentors, 'guys, this is how I feel, this is

141   what happens, we spend most of our time at our in-laws, Sundays we are there,

142   during the week, we are there.' So I had to tell her that 'I appreciate your family.

143   They are nice people. But this is how I feel and my feelings have nothing to do

144   with that I don't like going to her home…before I explained it to her I first spoke to

145 my mentors about it. They also said they felt the same way, they visited their in-
146 laws but they also didn't like going there too frequently. So I explained to her that
147 that is how I felt, because I felt that way but had suppressed it thinking it was just
148 me but only too find they felt the same way when I asked their views…I noticed
149 that it would end up – you know when they were building, they were building their
150 home and in a way that would work for the both of them, so I also have married
151 someone who's different and my wife has also married someone who's different
152 so she can't take the laws and things that built her home and expect that we'd
153 build with the same things. So I saw in the end that spending too much time there
154 would mean I have to adopt their style and lifestyle into my family. So we had to
155 speak about it. 'We have to create balance'.

Int: So how did she take it?

156 **R6H:** On her side it was difficult because, I don't know if it's because she thought I
157 was trying to separate her from her family because she's very close to her family.
158 But when you get married, there has to be something that shows that you've come
159 out from your family as I have come out from my family to meet you. So you too
160 have to do something to come close to me…So reaching a conclusion where we
161 agree was tough, there were times where we really wrestle (laughs)…she was
162 insisting so I said to her 'if you want to go home, go home, just allow me the space
163 that if I don't want to go, I don't go and I shouldn't feel condemned, when you
164 come back you blackmail me emotionally…as long as you'll be fine with going
165 alone and come back fine. So we agreed. Because there were times where during
166 the week she'd want to go home and I'd have to go there to fetch her when I
167 knock-off from work. 'No, no, if you know you want to go home, speak with me and
168 check if I'll be able to fetch you or you can take the car and go' cause they'd be
169 times where her mother would collect her and they'd go shopping before going
170 home and she'll only call me when she asks me to collect her. I'm knocking off
171 from work and I'm tired and when you get there it's not a matter of just collecting
172 her, you'll have to go in and you'll end up coming back around eleven at night and
173 you're tired and in the morning you have to wake up to go to work. 'No, no, if you
174 want to go home decide on a day and let me know, and let's arrange…let's talk
175 about it.'…I know she has a strong personality so I had to insist on some things
176 that this is how they should be done.

Int: How involved were you families during the marriage process (from initiation till the wedding)? Can you give examples?

177 **R6W:** I think the great involvement was from my immediate family. I have a really
178 great support system. Both my parents are still alive. With regards to the
179 engagement, the lobolo negotiations took place twice. When they first came the
180 first time – honestly, the process was very external to me because I was only
181 involved a little, the only thing I had to do was to be there. In terms of the
182 organizational part, my mom was orchestrating everything…so I didn't really do
183 much when the family came, I just gave them my bank card, I have no idea what
184 they put together and how. I was just there. Even when the lobolo was being
185 finalised, they did most of the work. When it came to the wedding…we honestly
186 wanted to just go sign for a marriage certificate cause we were like 'we're not
187 spending two hundred thousand on a wedding', but they were not hearing it. They
188 explained this to us that 'the marriage is yours, but the wedding is ours, it's our
189 thing. So just be there, even the programme is ours. In fact most of the guests…I
190 think our guests took up forty percent if not thirty five of the people who were
191 there. In seven hundred plus people I only knew three hundred of them, three fifty
192 at the most. So when it comes to the wedding, the only thing I chose was my
193 husband and only one of the wedding dresses, with the rest my mom was like 'I've
194 got this'. Which is okay because I hated the process, I hated having to shop for
195 three hours for a wedding dress, I might just pick one. 'Just pick one, if it were up
196 to me, we'd all be in jeans and t-shirts' I really didn't care. It was a nightmare. I
197 was cranky the entire time. My mom was like 'next time I'm taking your matron of
198 honour, you're such a grouch.' What my brides maids were wearing was liaised
199 with my mom…so to sum up, my family was very very involved.

Int: What would you say were the advantages and disadvantages of your family's involvement in your marriage process which is the planning of the wedding in your case?

200 **R6W:** The advantage was that I could relinquish a lot of the responsibility and the
201 stress. I didn't enjoy the organizational part and so I could delegate that to other
202 people who had the skills so that allowed me to focus on things that were

203   important to me, like the actual moment and being there and understanding the

204   significance of what was happing in my life at the time. So that's the advantage.

205   Even financially, I mean people just popped in – I don't even know who bought the

206   cow, I didn't buy any of my wedding dresses – so even financially they really push

207   in and they did help. The disadvantage would probably be boundary crossing. At

208   some stage I had to speak to my mom about issues of boundary crossing to say

209   'as far as the first wedding is concerned, that's ours, but in terms of the Sunday

210   wedding that's the grooms side of the family'. She was really involved, at some

211   stage she called them to ask them 'do they need any help, what are the planning'.

212   'You're putting pressure on them…' so I had to speak to her and when she

213   wouldn't listen I had to go to my dad to say 'dad, your wife, please, she needs to

214   understand the boundary crossing.' I want to say it was a struggle to get everyone

215   to be happy, but I don't think that would be true, cause the real arguments that we

216   had were about the program, what would constitute the program. Both my parents

217   are pastors and they wanted to populate that with – I think we had one or two

218   people that we chose, the rest was like 'pastor so and so, pastor so and so'. I'd

219   say the biggest thing about their involvement was the boundary crossing.

Int: Did your family influence your decision to get married in any way?

R6W: Not really, not really. When I finished varsity, my dad officially released me

220

221   like 'no sisi you can bring someone if you want, you can get married, I think I'm

222   comfortable' and I was twenty three, twenty four at the time. So even though I was

223   given the permission to, I didn't really feel pressure to act on it. There were people

224   I had attachments to, people I thought were options. At home we have, uh, as a

225   general rule…before you start seeing someone my dad expects you to bring

226   somebody. 'Don't bring them once you've agreed to be in a relationship, once

227   there's a relationship, don't involve me.' So if ever there is somebody that you love

228   or you're thinking about, you'll bring him so he can see him and then give you feed

229   back. My husband wasn't the first guy that came. When they came, I would bring

230   my dad. To be honest with you, I think – I know I'm smart, but I do make a

231   distinction between the intelligence and the wisdom and I don't think those are

232   synonymous. And I know that how you feel especially when you've built castles in

233   the sky, can really interfere with you seeing things for what they are. And when

234   people get married, sometimes they become overly optimistic about things they

235   should not be overlooking because they want to feed the attachment. So it's easy

236   to be deceived. Not everybody who's a born-again Christian is for you. Not

237   everybody who is born again, even if they're a pastor, is a disciple, submitting to

238   God in their private space. And for me, when I got saved and was growing up,

239   God called me out of *umjolo* (sinful dating) and I knew that by the time I get

240   married, it had to be legit because I only wanted to do it once. And I knew that my

241   fragility doesn't allow me to just say yes to someone, I needed God there. And I

242   knew that once I'm attached to somebody, my chances of hearing God clearly are

243   very slim. So I had to allow the voice of authority in my space to speak into my

244   space, that's where my parents came in, that's where my mentors came in. And I

245   refrained from making decisions until I heard what they were to say. To the extent

246   that if my dad had reservations about a man, honestly I would pack my things and

247   move on. Even if I loved him, I knew I'd cry but I knew I'd eventually be alright. So

248   it happened I think with about two, three guys. So by the time I brough my

249   husband home, I didn't tell them because I knew that this was it. In fact, I knew he

250   was my husband long before I loved him, long before I had any sort of attachment

251   to him. So I wasn't quick to bring him home because I knew this was it. So by the

252   time I brought him home, the only thing my dad said was that 'I want to know that

253   he can take care of you without your two jobs if you were to decide to stay home,

254   that's what I want' and for me that was a yes because usually it's character

255   issues…So if the only reservation he had was the financial side, I knew that was it.

256   So, to answer your question, they did influence it in the sense that I did care how

257   they felt about my spouse, I did care how he comes off to them so the decision to

258   marry in terms of who it is that I get married not necessarily the time I get married

259   or the pressure thereof. There was somebody that they loved for me but they

260   refrained from telling me because they didn't want me to feel the pressure so I

261   think the only influence that they did have was in terms of how they felt about him.

262   If they did have reservations about him I think that would have been very very

263   complex for me. So their influence is here and there.

     Int: How did your parents respond to your choice?

264   **R6W:** I told my dad first, I was terrified of telling my mom, I don't know why. In fact

265   I told my mom two weeks before the lobolo that there's a guy in my life, she didn't

266   know. But I told my dad the previous year that there's somebody who I think is the

267 one. And his response was as I said and he asked me what are the indicators that
268 make me think this is the one, particularly what have I heard from God. He wasn't
269 even interested in how I feel about him. 'What are the spiritual indicators? where's
270 compatibility in terms of passion for ministry? Where's the eternal goals, where do
271 you guys fit in there? What can you say makes you know for sure?' And I had to
272 engage him in that and he was okay with it…To be honest with you also, I think
273 there was a part of him that may have dismissed it because at that time my
274 husband wasn't working and unbeknown to me he had been to dad because he
275 had said that when there's someone he should tell him…so by the time I went to
276 my dad he said he actually told me. So I think my dad thought that I would
277 probably outgrow it, because he said to me 'don't say anything to him, don't say
278 yes, don't say no cause what if doesn't work in the next year and you kind of lose
279 interest and somebody else comes along' and I was like 'okaay'. So at that time he
280 may have dismissed it, to such an extent that in a couple months when I came to
281 tell him that 'dad your conditions were met and the want to come now', he
282 laughed, for like ten minutes with tears in his eyes. Because it felt so unexpected.
283 So his response at first, he didn't have any reservations but he wanted to er on the
284 side of caution…But when things came together he was very happy, that was the
285 first time I saw my dad respond like that to a man I brought to him. Even my mom
286 was like 'your dad is inviting everyone to the lobolo celebration and he can't do
287 that because this is a family thing.' In fact my dad handled the engagement
288 service himself. Pastors usually ask other pastors, but my dad was like 'no, I'm
289 doing it'. He was happy. My mom laughed. I just sent here a watsapp while at
290 work, I'm like 'mom we have to talk about boys' and I told her I met someone and
291 she said we should talk when we get home. She asked who is he and I sent her a
292 picture. She laughed and laughed. 'Am I missing something? What's so funny?'
293 She's like 'I did not see that coming.' But she was happy… My husband has been
294 in the church since 2007…and mom always commented about how lucky the lady
295 who would marry him would be because they had a front row seat to the
296 transformation process from the time he became born-again to what he was at the
297 time…little did she know. So she laughed.

Int: At present, how involved are your families in your marriage? Can you give examples?

R6W: By invitation. My family as a unit, they are sensitive to boundaries a person
(giggles) who can get a bit, sometimes is my mom but when I reprimand her she
can – the first time she came here she literally rearranged my sofas, I was like
'mom you can't do that, this is not your house…you can't come in here and
change my sofas, I like them I like my black curtains, you can't change them. No,
you can't go into my room and rearrange the bedspread'…But the wonderful thing
is when you make her aware she does apologise and she does move back. But in
terms of their involvement, it really is by invitation. They are very very supportive.
If they see that we need something, they'll always jump in, even then they're very
sensitive not to impose themselves. They respect my husband a lot…So I would
say it's by invitation and it's very respectful. We haven't had issues like they're
demanding, they really do give us the space. When we got married we decided
we'd live in Leslie, we didn't want to be around because we wanted some privacy.
I know that it was challenging for them but they never actually verbalized it and the
tried as hard as they could to support us in that even though it's not what they
preferred. In fact they spoke up for us to outsiders who were making comments, it
was our family that was like 'no man, that's what they want to do so it's okay'. So
they were sensitive to boundaries, they still are.

Int: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of your families
current involvement in your marriage?

R6W: Well I guess the most obvious advantage would be the privacy – I'm very
private. I love my space. I love sharing time and space with people I allow into that
space when I allow it. Impositions make me very eeky. So I love that they're able
to see where they should be involved and where they shouldn't. Even in terms of
the things that they say. You'll find that they won't pass comments that show you
that there's actually something that they're not happy with. They try as much as
they can to be respectful in every possible way and I really do appreciate that. It
gives me space to establish my home the way I want to. I grew up with both my
parents so I have an idea of what a home looks like but there are things I would
like to do differently and I want to do that without being blackmailed. Without being
made to feel guilty about it. To establish it the way that it works for me. And so
when they understand those boundaries, they give me the time and the space to
be able to do that freely. So that is an advantage. I don't think I can think of a

329 disadvantage at this stage. All I can think about are the advantages. I give them

330 information as and when I want to. If there are things I don't want them to know,

331 they don't pry, so I think I like this arrangement (giggles).

Int: Would you say your relationship with your spouse has been negatively or positively affected by the involvement of your families?

332 **R6W:** Maybe that can be a double-edged sword, there could be two different

333 extremes. One extreme is that perhaps the advantages, we have benefitted in

334 terms of a support system. He gets a support system he hasn't had before, our

335 backgrounds are very different. I remember the first time we went our for Sunday

336 lunch after we had gotten married, for him it was a very very new thing 'we're all

337 sitting together around the table, I love this, this feels like home.' So he's

338 benefitted from that support system, to have mom call and check up, it's

339 something he has not had so he's benefited in that sense. And us as a unit, I think

340 that support system makes us feel cushioned in the new space of life that we're in.

341 And maybe the disadvantages would be to say, I'm just thinking a couple of

342 months ago – my mom loves family gatherings, she's all about family

343 relationships. So she wanted us to come over every Sunday for lunch. And I'm

344 used to it so it's not a thing. Little did I know that for my husband, that could have

345 been a bit strenuous cause I mean the works six days and sometimes he just want

346 to come home and be a bum. And he did not feel like he was been given the

347 space to do that. Like 'I don't want to be made to feel guilty for just being in my

348 house.' And that caused friction because I was like 'but what's the big deal, you

349 can go relax at home…And my mom was insisting on it 'no guys we have to build

350 a relationship, relationships are very intentional and and and'. And I think for him it

351 could have felt like an imposition and for me it was 'why do you feel like it's an

352 imposition, this is my family, I live with you'. So in terms of the time that we spent

353 at home and the involvement of the family…I think that did cause a bit of friction,

354 we had to work through things like that. I had to explain to my family that 'some

355 Sundays he just wants to be here, I'll come if I come, but give him that space' and

356 they were able to understand that. So the friction was short-lived but it was there

357 nonetheless.

Int: Which cultural acts/ceremonies did you have to perform as part of the marriage process (e.g. payment of ilobolo)? I've heard you mention ilobolo, were there any other ceremonies besides that?

358 **R6W:** No but there was pressure, you remember the relatives who wanted us to
359 do *umembeso*? *Umembeso* - the exchange of gifts, but we had an issue with that
360 because they wanted to gift people who had already passed away. And so my
361 husband had to then say 'I mean but you guys know we're born again, we don't do
362 that.' So that may have caused some friction so we decided not to do it. Even at
363 home they wanted to do that, but in a very friendly manner, like gifting the sisters,
364 it never went to the ancestral part. So when it put the ancestral part we thought
365 let's leave it. I remember the aunts, they were very unhappy, at some stage they
366 threatened not to come to the wedding. 'This wedding is doomed, how can you not
367 acknowledge the ancestors? We need to introduce the bride…' but my husband
368 said that's not going to happen. So other than lobolo and the actual wedding, even
369 the traditional wedding, it was just to be introduced at home. On the Sunday we
370 came in and the aunts let me know about the family history, what they expect and
371 there were speeches, that's all there was.

Int: What is your understanding of ilobolo? What does it mean?

372 **R6H:** I think on my side, ilobolo is when two families come together to build
373 relationship…I think it's more about relationship.

374 **R6W:** How it's been explained, okay the relational part of the coming together of
375 two families. But there's a whole can of worms there cause if we're establishing
376 relationships, how do you put a price on that? We were told that the groom is
377 going to thank the bride's family that they raised a wife for him who'll build his
378 home and bear children for him and increase the family's name. So it's an addition
379 to the family, it's a gift that the groom gives, right? But a gift comes from the heart,
380 does it not? Do you put a price to the gift and who gets to decide what that price
381 is? I mean they get an addition to their family but so does ours. They have a son
382 that they did not have. I'm going to add value, but so does he, I have a covering, I
383 have exclusivity in terms of the relationship. So the gift is quiet two-way so who
384 gifts who here? Even when I give him children, I can't give him children if he

385 doesn't give me the seed. So a part of me feels like it's very one-dimensional and
386 a bit exploitative and I'm not sure if it's a cultural aspect that is currently
387 functioning to serve young black Africans. It's very expensive to get married.
388 That's why you find we cohabitate a lot…So the basic definition, we understand
389 that it's when the groom's family goes and gifts the bride's family for the bride and
390 the addition to their family.

391 **R6H:** But I think it's not just about that. I think it has a deeper meaning, especially
392 to us men. In us there's that, I don't know if to call it pride, but it gives us a certain
393 sense when we do it than to just take you into my house. It speaks something
394 about us when we do it, even in the way you perceive yourself, like 'wow, I did
395 that'. So it's not just something you can dismiss, there's something it does for us
396 as men. That's we respect it and with some even respect the person we paid the
397 cows for. Even the way she leaves home, there's dignity in it…

Int: What are your views about this ilobolo?

398 **R6H:** On my side, to answer that I think I'd have to go back to check even the
399 background of lobolo, what was the meaning? Why did they uphold it the way they
400 did back then? And check what was good with it then? I think its only then when I
401 have the background and history that I'd be able to..

402 **R6W:** Two things for me. I think the first thing would be in his response to his
403 assertion about the validity of lobolo because it brings a sense of pride to males. I
404 think that's something I can definitely agree with. I think that has a double-edged
405 sword in it because for some men it means I've found my soulmate, this is the one
406 I'm committing to, this is a symbol to say I'm committing to you, you are unlike the
407 others…and that brings the sense of pride, the sense of dignity and respect. But
408 I'm wondering if it's possible that that same pride can be the reason why some
409 men feel a sense of not only ownership but possession to say 'I paid lobolo for
410 you, so there are things that are owed to me, you're here to serve me'…I've been
411 to so many bridal showers, even growing up in the church where I was like 'I'm not
412 sure if I want this for myself' because I mean you make it sound like when you
413 come into a man's family once he pays lobolo for you, you're there to serve him.
414 And it's one dimensional, it's not reciprocal. And as much as I want to hit our
415 church mothers for teaching that, it's something that's propelled by the custom to

416 say 'when the bride is at her in-laws, she wakes up at four and does this and that

417 because you owe that to us because we paid cows for you'. So it's like we're

418 exchanging this for a service. And that becomes and issue, because I've come for

419 your convenience. When I buy a fridge, the moment the fridge doesn't do what I

420 want I need to take it back…then it feels like a commodity. So I think for men who

421 are sober like men who have a sense of substance that when he gets a wife it's

422 his wife and it's a statement that he's making to the world…And the issue of

423 relevance. I think ilobolo will always be relevant as Africans. We might have to be

424 a bit dynamic in how we are rethinking it because there are many cultural

425 elements that are evolving and changing but still remain within the African context.

426 Culture has to serve you, right? It has to function to better your life…but if it

427 becomes a barrier, then we have to think maybe there is another way we should

428 be looking at this…maybe we should open a bit of leeway here to say what if we

429 could do this and this. I think maybe you'd have a lot less young blacks who are

430 marrying at the age forty-five. So the relevance is there but maybe the inclination

431 should change just a little bit.

432 **R6H:** I think another thing, ilobolo is ours as Africans and we need to take pride in

433 it…when you've paid ilobolo you are married…If we say that our culture should be

434 discarded, we'll adopt other cultures and see our own as inferior because we don't

435 take pride in it...I think we should continue with ilobolo and take pride in it.

436 **R6W:** And also that would really help if ilobolo would go back to its purest form

437 and how it was done. For some families the lobolo is invested into issues of the

438 wedding…but nowadays it's completely different, it's something else all together

439 that makes you question the integrity of it…I remember with my mother when it

440 came to ilobolo, we had very serious friction about what it symbolises. We

441 understand it culturally that ilobolo is a marriage, when you're done paying, you

442 can ask for your wife – marriage begins when families agree, that's a covenant.

443 Whatever we'll be doing after that, inviting neighbours, that's a celebration…I

444 wanted her to admit that everything that we add is an addition to what marriage

445 actually is. Can we not make it a doctrine, and not make people who don't decide

446 to do the celebrations as you want them to feel that their union is inferior to

447 yours…We're not dispelling the importance of the blessing, but I mean the pastor

448   can come bless us at home. We can exchange rings and the pastor come place a

449   blessing and pray for us…

Int: What is your understanding of the concept of ubuntu as expressed in phrase 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'?

450   **R6W:** I want to say it's common in many peoples but it's more predominant in

451   African cultures. I am who I am because of the people around me and their

452   contributions. In other words, the value I would place on a rich person is the same

453   value I share because you never really know where your help comes from. You

454   treat people with respect, the same behaviour who'd expect someone to treat you

455   with. In other words there's never a reason to mistreat somebody, you go out of

456   your way to treat one another we'll. You don't say or do things that are offensive

457   unless you're absolutely pushed to. So the issue of respecting one another. I

458   remember that in our household, we didn't bang doors…even when you were

459   angry you were still expected to fix your face, your tone needs to be okay because

460   this is another human being. So even outside of the issue of salvation, you're

461   talking to somebody who's got the value of the life of Christ, just as an African, you

462   regard others…You love your neighbour as you love yourself…

463   **R6H:** I remember when we were young, Christmas was a time where we came

464   together, not just as a family at home. We'd come together with other people.

465   We'd go from home to home eating. It was something that showed that we are

466   united, we are one thing. So now we've adopted this thing, which I don't like

467   because it doesn't work for me and I wasn't raised that way, that each person is in

468   their own cocoon. That has become our life now, that each person minds their own

469   business…it's the first time I see it that you live with neighbours you don't know…

470   **R6W:** Relationships and interconnectedness. The individualistic part came with

471   colonization. One of the issues I had with psychology was the very individualistic

472   nature of even the curriculum…and for me to be able to engage in it I have to

473   relinquish a very significant part of how I understand my life. There is a very very

474   distinct difference between how Africans understand the interconnectedness and

475   relationship as opposed to other cultures…

476   **Int:** What would you say this concept means for marriage?

477   **R6H:** I think it depends on the individual, how they were raised. Where they raised

478   with ubuntu? I think the way I was raised is different from the way my wife was

479   raised. We hadn't spoken about it when it comes to our children but my wish is

480   that we implement ubuntu even with our children. If we grew up concerned about

481   other people, we should take that and instil it in our children…When it comes to

482   our marriage, I wish that we could adopt it in such a way that even our children

483   that we raise will see it…our family mustn't be secluded.

484   **R6W:** That makes sense. I agree. I think one of the best advantages of ubuntu as

485   we understand it is the freedom to be fragile and vulnerable with the people

486   around you. I allows you that space…The comfort and the security of ubuntu is

487   that you can be in the space that you're in and be protected in that space and be

488   provided for in that space by your people in your circle and around you. So for me

489   ubuntu I think in the context of our marriage again goes to the interconnectedness

490   with other people. Whether it's with other couples, with the people we're

491   fellowshipping with to say can these relationships be genuine so that we can help

492   each other carry one another's burdens? So that I can be comfortable to say 'I'm

493   not coping? How did you get passed that?'…Interconnectedness with other young

494   couples to say 'where are you guys at? How are you dealing with this?' So that we

495   don't put out a front that we've got things all figured out. There's a lot of

496   adjustment that takes place, there's friction…I think in addition to what my

497   husband was saying that it's about teaching the family, having a culture at home

498   of giving, a culture of acceptance, of friendliness, of sharing. It's also about having

499   genuine relationships that allow you to sincerely co-exist with the people around

500   you…

  Int: What would you say is the role of family/parents in a marriage?

501   **R6H:** If my parents were still alive, what I'd wish from them is support. Support can

502   be in many forms. But knowing that they're there, they love me and if I hit a hard

503   place I can go to them for help…

504   **R6W:** I want to say mentorship, but I'm taking it back. I think parents should

505   always be a safety net for a marriage. A shadow for resting. We'll struggle if we

506   say they must be mentors because usually there's a whole lot happening in the

507   relationship that sort of doesn't allow us to have that mentorship relationship and

508 its not comfortable. I remember my mom couldn't have the sex talk with me when I
509 was going to get married…So I think just to know that as a support system they
510 are there for whatever you need them. If it's advice, again by invitation, if we're
511 saying 'what do you think about this?' To understand that I'm asking for the advice
512 but you don't make the decision on my behalf. In other words, when I invite you
513 into the space, be able to occupy that space without crossing the boundaries…To
514 know that if I call home or I'm home, things will come together…

Int: Genesis 2:24 says 'The man shall leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife…' what is your understanding of this verse?

515 **R6W:** This was mainly an instruction to the husband…You can't say 'for me and
516 my house' if you haven't left. You can't cleave to me if you haven't let go of
517 something there. I think there's something godly but also very attractive about a
518 man who can distinguish *ekhaya* (the home he comes from) *nakwami* (the home
519 he's building) and be able to separate those two as and when he needs to…You
520 can't draw boundaries for your family, you can't serve God the way that you need
521 to serve God to the extent which you need to serve God if you haven't actually
522 left…I'm not sure why God didn't direct this to woman because everywhere you go
523 you'll find that we are still very connected to our families. I go out with my mom
524 twice a week if not more. He'll come here and my mom is here to pick me up and
525 he'll go home once in while, like every other weekend.

526 **R6H:** Which means I got the leaving right.

527 **R6W:** Yes! (highfives) So I don't know why it's directed to you guys, but as a priest
528 in my home, you've got to be able to set the trend for certain things. God has
529 given you the responsibility of leadership…

530 **R6H:** To add to what she's said, I think when God said to Abraham that he must
531 leave his family…in other words you leave there, and there's somewhere else
532 where you're going. Where he was going he was going to establish something
533 with God, something new. I think one of the reasons that makes God says this I
534 think is the influence we get as men from our homes. Maybe when God says this
535 there's an issue of ancestral worship or idolatry, so when God says leaves, he
536 knows the kind of influence your family has over you. He knows what he wants
537 you to build and in order for you to build this you have to leave…Why you should

538   cleave is because God wants to start something new through you and your wife,

539   which he can't start if you haven't detached from home. Because what he wants

540   you to go start represents him as God…We know that marriage is God's institution

541   and we know what God wants to reveal through marriage and for it to be revealed

542   it needs you to leave.

Int: In your view, does this verse contradict or agree with what the concept of ubuntu means when it comes to marriage?

543   **R6H:** There are things that the Bible doesn't show clearly. Like the issue of

544   Abraham and getting Isaac a wife. I don't know if it shows, but I haven't seen it,

545   when he sent the servant to get Isaac a wife, where did Isaac and his new wife

546   live? Cause there's a possibility that Africans grooms bring their brides to their

547   own home out of what the Bible says. I think for me to answer this question

548   properly, I'd have to go back and check according to history, how was the set up…

549   **R6W:** I don't think there's a contradiction in the Bible regarding leaving and

550   cleaving and I think we're monopolising it into a very narrow field if we say it's in a

551   physical sense or a spiritual sense. I think the leaving and cleaving part has very

552   much to do with the situation you're in. You can leave home to go stay in another

553   province but find that you still haven't left because you're making your new home a

554   colony of your home. We're not at you home but the curtains are your mother's,

555   the way I have to cook is your mother's style, so it's inaccurate to say that if I've

556   left physically I've left my family. So the leaving and cleaving has to do with the

557   condition of the relationship. If to go start the new thing that God wants you to start

558   needs you to leave physically, then that's what you do…If it's spiritual then that's

559   what you do, I don't think we can take an umbrella approach to it. So to answer

560   your question, I don't think there's a contradiction at all. God is very familiar with

561   where we are so he knows what leaving and cleaving means for you. Once he

562   says leave and cleave, we check what does it mean for your situation to leave and

563   cleave. So no I don't think there's a contradiction at all. Even within the context of

564   ubuntu we can still do the leaving and cleaving the way God wants us to do it for

565   our family. Ubuntu does not restrict that at all, in fact ubuntu may enhance it in

566   more ways.