AN ANALYSIS OF THE INCORPORATION OF WESTERN PRACTICE IN BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN TRADITIONAL WEDDINGS.

by

MASECHABA NGWENYA

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for

the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: MS J SIMANGO

CO-SUPERVISOR: MRS B M SEMENYA

JANUARY 2024

DECLARATION

Name: **Ms Masechaba Ngwenya**

Student Number: **6004-106-4**

Degree: **Master of Arts Psychology in Research Consultation**

Research Title: **An analysis of the incorporation of Western practice in black South African traditional weddings**

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference.

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.

M NGWENYA **DATE**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Black South Africans conduct their matrimonial ceremonies by practising African indigenous traditional customs, however, they simultaneously conduct white weddings in addition to their African traditional customs. The celebration of white weddings by black people should be understood within the context of their colonial history which has had an impact on cultural practices. This study aimed to gain a critical understanding of, and to explain the reasons that motivate black people to conduct white wedding customs in conjunction with traditional ones in South Africa. It traced the history of wedding conduct or practices of black South Africans and the dialectical process of those practices. The researcher employed a qualitative research methodology, utilising a focus group discussion for data collection and a critical discourse analysis for analysing the research results. The results of the study are discourses focusing on opposition, societal pressure, legal discourses, religious imperialism, economic discourses, and condemnation of African culture. These results pivot towards an overarching discourse centering on the impact of colonisation on African marriage which leads to its incorporation of Western practice. This is causing incongruence of thoughts, feelings, and behaviour in black people's marriage conduct, where black people exist in a double conscious experience, particularly in terms of marriage conduct.

Keywords: Colonisation, Coloniality, Culture, Dialectics, Double Consciousness, Identity, Matrimonial Ceremonies, Oppression, Traditional marriage, White wedding

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A wedding is an event that indexes specific significant cultural practices of individuals who are entering a matrimonial relationship. Historically, various customs have been adopted to symbolise the cultural significance of the wedding enterprise. Monger (2004) notes that customs and ceremonies are deeply ingrained in the psyche of cultures and communities. Consequently, there are few societies that do not have some form of ceremonial recognition of the marriage, and such ceremonies are often based upon some form of tradition. In ancient Europe, for example, wedding customs were replete with symbols, such as the veil, cake, and ring, which conveyed how European society considered nuptial relations. Diverse cultures have over the years invented their own wedding customs to celebrate marriage and to forge new relations between two families. While some of the customs have been transformed and adapted to reflect the changes happening in society, the symbolic meaning that is carried through these practices have remained unaltered in modernity. In South Africa, multiculturalism presents unique possibilities for observing weddings. Also, given South Africa's unique history of colonisation, combining Western and traditional practices have become a common sight in matrimonial undertakings, particularly among black people. Often, the question that such undertakings evoke in the public imagination revolve around those to whom the customs and practices being observed during such weddings belong.

In this chapter, the statement of the problem is presented to foreground how the incorporation of traditional and western practices in wedding celebrations in South Africa reflect a lingering colonial legacy that is intractable. Furthermore, the research question, aims and objectives of the study are presented. In addition, the rationale and background for the study are discussed and the chapter concludes with a presentation of the chapter outline.

Statement of the Problem

It is common parlance within the South African context, as Mupotsa (2014) indicates, to speak of modern or white weddings and as well as traditional ones. Often these types of weddings are spoken of as though they denote the same thing even though there are distinct

differences and variations in these practices. Mupotsa (2014) notes that when speaking about the idea of a wedding, Black people tend to immediately be inclined to imagine a wedding as the "white" wedding and, in so doing, imagine something that belongs to some vague notion of Western or European culture. While this could be tied down to the fact that the white wedding historically is emblematic of white people's invented traditions for observing and celebrating marriage, what Pauli and van Dijk (2016) regard as the reconfigurations of marriages and wedding in South Africa may equally be a plausible account for Mupotsa's (2014) observation. For Pauli and van Dijk, "[m]arriage has changed from a universal rite of passage into a conspicuous celebration of middle-class lifestyle [and while] [b]ridewealth or lobola remains important [it] is supplemented by a plethora of new rituals and expenditures" (p. 257). This brings us to an understanding of what the white wedding is and involves. A White wedding typically involves a white dress for the bride, a suit and tie for the groom, and the setting usually being a very formal one, with a public declaration of commitment in front of others, sanctioned by the law or church. This forms the basis for the reference to white traditional weddings as modern or white weddings, and African traditional weddings as traditional weddings.

Weddings and the festivities that structure such an event involve making choices about what they should entail. That there must be a choice, even if determined by financial reasons, suggests that there is a range of possibilities from which a selection can be made. The act of separating off which traditions or customs to observe when black people decide to enter into a nuptial relational contract must, of necessity, be appraised against the gaze of colonial modernity, particularly in the South African context. This means that the act of choosing which type of wedding ("white" or traditional) practice to observe must be problematised to include more than just material considerations. Understandings of wedding practices must principally reflect on the colonial matrix power and how this operates to shape black people's struggles, which are incumbent in making a choice on how to reconcile the tensions that issue from celebrating a wedding. An important matter to consider is that hidden behind and tied to wedding celebrations are people's values and knowledge systems about matrimonial relations as well as expectations about the appropriate means to observe nuptial rituals. To illustrate the dialectics of choice connected to wedding celebrations for Black South African's, it is worth quoting at length the subjective experience of one of Mupotsa's (2014) interviewee:

I have never really applied my mind to consider how I identify myself. But when it came down to it, I felt that I needed to do something a little more authentic to me. And I think that the reason why is that even while my father grew up in a Christian environment and we grew up as Christians, our African beliefs or cultural beliefs have always been important, especially to my dad. It is quite interesting because you can actually see the struggle in him, because he sort of wants to honour his ancestors and that line. And then there is also the Christian and that line. I think my father juggled those things also when I was younger. But as he gets older, as we get older the cultural aspects become more prominent. So, when the time when I was the age to get married, I had a choice firstly. Financially I could not do both, it was either or. And at the end of the day, I was like this is more important for me. It was more authentic and a lot less shaped by what others are doing. And what is sort of expected. It gave me an opportunity to dig and find out what this thing is all about (Mupotsa, 2014, p. 227).

The above extract from Mupotsa's (2014) participant is evidence that there are tensions when black people plan for weddings. It is therefore important to understand the reasons behind black people incorporating both a white and a traditional wedding during their matrimonial celebrations. As such, the research problem is based on the conflict and tensions experienced by black people when getting married. As Pauli and van Dijk (2016) argues, the incorporation of white practices into traditional weddings among black people, particularly in South Africa, has become a common contemporary trend. As a site that boosts the celebration of both traditional African and Western customs and rites associated to marriage, the weddings of black people in South Africa have come to resemble a hybridity of traditions. Bhabha (1986, p. 149) offered a crucial conceptualisation of hybridity as a mechanism that constructs the colonial subject and suggested that such a subject is constructed in a "repertoire of conflictual positions". Drawing on Bhabha's conceptual scheme, the incorporation of white practices into traditional weddings of black people cannot be seen as just an innocent blending of different traditions. This blending of wedding practices must be seen as constituting the fulcrum of conflictual positions, as Bhabha argues, which render the black subject as "the site of both fixity and fantasy" (Easthope, 1998, p. 145). The black subject, as Easthope argues, is constructed through a process which ensures that

such a figure is almost always located within disagreeable positions. As such, this process is one that is "uneven, divided, incomplete, and therefore potentially resistant" (Easthope, p. 341).

To recognise the incorporation of white practices into traditional weddings as a site of hybridity suggests at once that such wedding practices not only signify but are, in themselves, a site of ambivalence. Such an imagining of black weddings exposes the gravity of psychological contradictions that weigh on black people when having to make decisions about a respectable way to celebrate their wedding. Thinking about black weddings as a site of ambivalence therefore demands a theoretical response that recognises the role of power and how it operates to subvert traditional customs and creates a new Western normativity for evaluating wedding practices. The decision to incorporate Western practices into traditional wedding observances can therefore make more sense by examining the repertoire of positions of power and resistance made possible in this way. Thus, it becomes possible to understand the ambivalence that is bonded to black wedding celebrations.

Research Question

Based on the foregoing elaboration of the research problem, the overarching research question in this study is:

- How do black South Africans justify the incorporation of white wedding practices into their pre-existing traditional wedding customs?

Research Aim and Objectives

The primary aim of this research is to gain a critical understanding of the reasons that explain why Black people in South Africa incorporate white wedding customs in conjunction with traditional ones when conducting marital arrangements. To achieve this aim, the objectives of the study are to:

- analyse modern wedding practices among black South Africans that incorporate traditional African and Western customs,
- explore the points of tension and contradictions incumbent when conducting wedding celebrations for Black people.
- analyse how culture and history intersect to define the choice made to incorporate western and traditional customs during weddings.

- describe the intersections of race and identity in Black South African contemporary wedding practices.

Background and Motivation for the Study

Pertaining to traditional weddings, Mupotsa (2014) notes that there are specific traditional customs that black people subscribe to when conducting weddings. A major one being ikhazi, ilobola, or bogadi, which is almost standard for all black people in South Africa. Although there are different ethnic groups in South Africa, this custom is conducted by almost all black people from all ethnic groups (Koyana, 1980). For Koyana, there are nuanced differences in how the people to be married personalise the acts for themselves by adding or removing certain practices. However, the idealised intention of these negotiations is standard, as articulated by Mupotsa (2014), who states:

> One could crudely define [bogadi] as a process or set of negotiations between the families of a man and woman who intend to marry. These negotiations pay particular attention to the process of building relations between two "sets of kin", but also to how the woman/bride enters the family of the man, and the success of these negotiations gets marked in several demonstrations of this act. For instance, in the bride's "arrival" at her new home, in her being dressed in clothes intended to signal her symbolic entry to the "family" as well as in rituals specifically related to her fertility. It is a process that seems unending, for even when children are born into the marriage, exchanges and relations marking the child's belonging to the patrilineal kin continue this process. I would also consider the "damage" negotiations in this refrain. These are negotiations that follow pregnancy outside of marriage when the couple does not intend to remain romantically involved. The child acquires its position and legitimacy through these negotiations and compensation to the woman's family. The ritualised exchange of women's potential fertility is not unique to lobola, or "traditional" negotiations. It is certainly mirrored in the symbolic language of the white wedding, not just crudely in the delivery of the bride to her groom but also in many other aspects not just crudely in the delivery of the bride to her groom but also in many other aspects such as the presence of children in the bridal party (p. 15).

The creation of the institution of marriage, following Mupotsa's (2014) insights, involves the observation of rituals that are critical in organising reciprocal relations between different families. In this sense, traditional marriage rituals are a crucial point of reference for Black people in Southern Africa and provide the backdrop for formalisation of marital relations between the couple as well as organisation of inter-family and communal social relations (Pauli & van Dijk, 2016). This traditional system, however, exists alongside a legal framework that regulates the marital union between two parties in South Africa. Mupotsa (2014) notes how there are clear historical reasons why we inherit a multiple legal structure for marriage in South Africa. The validation of a wedding in South Africa is based on having a civil marriage and/or a customary marriage. Both types of union have different ways in which they are legitimised and validated (Mupotsa, 2014; Koyana, 1980).

This research was inspired by the observations made in relation to emerging public yet unique trend of celebrating both traditional and white wedding ceremonies among Black people who get married in South Africa. An example of this trend can be drawn from the television (TV) show *Our Perfect Wedding*, which is based on following a couple on their journey preparing for their weddings a few days prior to the events. What typically happens with black people is that they have more than one event – they have a white wedding and a traditional wedding. The impact of media can therefore also be considered because the content has meanings inscribed to it which influence people's perceptions and behaviour. Exploring the research problem through an academic lens affords a good opportunity as it is a solid platform to advance knowledge regarding matrimonial undertakings in South Africa. Still study adds to existing knowledge that explores reconfigurations of marriages and their celebration in South Africa such as that of Koyana (1980), Mupotsa (2014) and Pauli and van Dijk (2016). In terms of gaps existing in literature regarding the dialectical nature of African traditional weddings, this study analyses the research problem using a combination of unique methodologies.

Chapter Outline

Chapter two presents the literature review as well as the theoretical framework of the study. The research method is engaged in chapter three and the results of the study are pressed in chapter four. Chapter five discusses the results and the conclusion, recommendations for future research as well as limitations of the study are presented in chapter six.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Weddings are conducted in varying ways from one culture to another. Ecological influences such as socioeconomic status, religion, sexuality, race, gender, pop-culture, history, and the sociopolitical background have a direct or indirect influence on how people choose to conduct a wedding. These can result in conflicts, which may be personal or interpersonal, between the couple or other stakeholders in the wedding preparation. It is almost impossible not to consider a black person's standing in relation to their culture and the sociocultural context in which they find themselves. Ahluwalia and Nursey-Bray (1997) state that the history of Africa is one that is rife with cultural oppression on a major scale and nowhere else was the oppression so comprehensive, and so savage where African culture was belittled, and the status and standing of Africans as humans was called into question. As such, when thinking about wedding from a position of blackness it is important to consider the effects and manifestations of cultural oppression which may come across in nuanced forms.

This chapter provides a discussion of the literature review and the conceptual framework that guides the study.

Formalization of Marriage Regime: On African Rites of Passage

Marriage is an institution whose creation involves a formal process that requires adherence to specific protocols to formalise the union between two parties. For Africans, as stated by Semenya (2014), this is marked by negotiations that must be conducted in writing and installs the presence of both families in this process. The formalization of marriage in an African sense adheres to specific customary laws that prescribe how rituals such as marriage ought to be observed. Rodney (1973) elaborates on formality in African education, where he states that some aspects of African education were formal meaning that there was a specific programme and a conscious division between teachers and pupils. Given the knowledge that African society is communal in nature, Rodney states that formal education in pre-colonial Africa was also directly connected with the purposes of the society, just like informal education. With respect to education, which is directly connected to rites of passage in African society, initiation or

"coming of age" is also mentioned as an example which has a teaching programme embedded in it.

A variety of crucial learnings and experiences are present in initiation schools, such as hunting, organising religious rituals, circumcision, and the practice of medicine, as suggested by Rodney (1973), who asserts that these learnings involve formal education within the family or clan. Given the outline of formal education in African society, Rodney argues that colonisers did not introduce education into Africa, because it was already there; rather, colonisers introduced a new set of formal educational institutions which partly supplemented and partly replaced those which were there before. For Rodney, the main purpose of the colonial school system was to train Africans to help man the local administration at the lowest ranks and to staff the private capitalist firms owned by Europeans. In effect, that meant selecting a few Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole. This demonstrates how African formal education has been supplemented, and some aspects replaced by the colonial system of education. An overview is provided of the different customs and rites of passage that are conducted by African people upon entry into a marriage union.

African Customary Marriage: Setting the Scene

Semenya (2014) alludes to the fact that several factors constitute marriage among the Basotho such as patlo, go laya, lobola/bogadi, damages (Monyakane, 2016; Mulaudzi, 2013).

Patlo

Patlo constitutes the initial process in the negotiation of marriage among the Sotho speaking groups, that is Basotho, Bapedi and Batswana, and refers to asking for a girl's hand in marriage. (Mokwana, 2009; Monyakane, 2016; Opong, 1997). Patlo, for Ellece (2012), is the most important ritual in Batswana weddings. Ellece outlines how a delegate from the groom's family visits the family of the prospective bride, asks for her hand in marriage, and negotiates the bride price. The idea of a "bride price" is often misconstrued to connote the idea that the prospective wife is bought at a certain price. Such a connotation, however, inaccurately suggests that the bride is being bought. This misconstrual of "bride price" as an economic transaction where a woman is an object that is purchased is a direct result of translation, particularly of traditional African customs into English that throws phenomena out of context. This is because there are meanings inscribed to language as supported by Imami et al. (2021) who states that language is

believed to function as an important instrument for expressing ethnic culture (i.e., beliefs, customs, rituals, and behaviours, which constitute the identity of a particular ethnic culture). The ritual of patlo and the negotiations that are incumbent in this ritual process are the foundation of traditional marriage (Denbow & Thebe, 2006). Marriage, as Ellece and Denbow and Thebe outline, will only be formally recognised through this ritual. Amongst the Basotho, this stage in the marriage process is called qelo ea mohope wa metsi (Opong) and go kgopela sego sa meetse in Bapedi culture (Mokwana). Mokhethi (1988) translates this stage as asking for the calabash (glass) of water. This can also be considered as asking for a gourd of water (Semenya, 2014). Opong (1997) further cites Laydvant (1952), who notes that this ritual is set in motion by sending a messenger to the maiden's parents with one animal, essentially stating the fact that he has been sent to ask for a calabash (glass) of water. According to Mokhethi (1988), this custom is preceded by another ritual in which the boy informs his parents of his desire to marry which is referred to as a raha morisoana (Opong, 1997). Oppong argues that this can be considered a rite of separation. This separation symbolically marks the process of emergence out of childhood into adulthood for the boy and girl. This is supported by Mokwana (2009), who states that a young man tells his parents that he needs a wife when choosing a marriage partner. Following qelo/qela ea mohope oa metsi, the Sotho boy and his friends will pay visits to his prospective bride, who will offer them food, which the boy and his friends should refuse to show that they are not brought by hunger (Ashton, 1952 cited in Opong, 1997). Ashton also states that, in this part, the girl will offer the boy a scarf (moqhaka) which serves as a token of her acceptance.

Go Laya

According to Ellece (2012), pre-marital advice/counselling, is given to the couple. This is referred to as go laya or go laa, by Denbow and Thebe (2006). In this ritual, the bride and groom both receive this counselling from the respective married family members on their obligations and responsibilities to one another as outlined by Ellece, and by Denbow and Thebe. Semenya (2014) extends this assertion by stating that bommaditsela, whom he explains as being representatives and negotiators from the wife and husband, have an extended role which is to offer traditional counselling to the couple prior and subsequent to the marriage in the event that the couple encounter difficulties.

Lobolo/Bogadi

Mupotsa (2014) defines the process of lobola as a set of negotiations between the families of a man and woman who intend to marry. Lobola is a Nguni term that is commonly used to refer to this process. Taking into consideration the diversity in terms of ethnic groups and languages in black South Africans, there are other terms used to refer to this act. These names are bogadi, bohali, xuma, lumalo, thaka, ikhazi, magadi, embheka, The Recognition of Customary Marriage Act 120 of 1998 also indicates that there may be other names which could be used to refer to this act. Monyakane (2016) states that the process of bogadi/bohadi is the practice of bringing cows to the home of the future bride once the number of cows is agreed upon by the two families. Similarly, in Nguni culture, Koyana (1980) regards ukuloboloa as the custom according to which a young man pays cattle or their monetary value to the father or guardian of the prospective wife. The conceptual meaning of *magadi,* relating to the indigenous custom in Bapedi community, has moral obligations, alliances, and social recognitions attached, as viewed by Sekhukhune (1988, cited in Mokwana, 2009). These attachments are to legitimise and recognise a marriage; they are also to acknowledge the wife's family for giving away their daughter; to assert the status of children within their paternal lineage; and to assert property rights of the given spouses, as explained by Denbow and Thebe (2006).

In terms of the number or amount of ikhazi, which is the cattle payment or monetary value of lobola, as given by Koyana (1980), it depends on the amount sought by the girl's guardian on the day(s) of negotiations. This does not mean that a woman is being bought as capitalistic societies would imply. Rodney (1973) explains that education in Europe was dominated by the capitalist class and that the same class bias was automatically transferred to Africa. To make matters worse, the racism and cultural boastfulness harboured by capitalism were included in the package of colonial education. This explains how, in many instances, lobola connotes buying or purchasing a woman.

Mupotsa (2014) explains lobola as a process of negotiation, which results in the coming together of two families. Opong (1997) infers that when an agreement is reached between the two families, an ox is killed as a sacrifice, which the author translates as the signing of a marriage contract and a religious ceremony to call for the protection of the ancestors over the new couple. Food and beer are shared among the attendees after negotiations have been settled,

as stated by Opong, who also alludes to how every formal gathering implicitly includes the ancestors for whom beer is poured on the ground. Opong also outlines the following with regard to the oxen given to the groom's father and maternal uncle after the bohali negotiations:

> Customarily the girl's father should give one beast *(ho hlabisa)* for every ten bohali cattle given by the groom's father. The mafura is skinned by both the boy and the girl's people. The girl's people skin the left side and the boy's people the right side of the beast. All work fast for it is believed that the side to finish first would dominate their future relations. The animal is then cut up and divided according to a complicated set of rules. Finally, the gall is poured over the groom's hands, usually by the father, and the bladder is tied round his right wrist. From a legal perspective, this is the culmination of the ceremony. The gall bladder serves as the ring which binds the couple together. The marriage rituals mentioned above are all rites of incorporation ushering the new couple into adulthood and marriage life (p. 34–35).

In Sotho culture, this ritual is referred to as ho hlabisa (Semenya, 2014). For Semenya, the act of slaughtering of the animal is an expression of thanks to bakgonyana and the spilling of its blood is a method of informing them about the impending marriage. The purpose of this ritual is to strengthen the bond between the two families and their ancestors. Both Semenya and Opong (1997) point out that the two families share the parts of the beast accordingly to complete the ritual.

Kaufman et al. (2001) outline how, in days past, there were standard costs in magadi by which a given number of cows would be equivalent to a certain amount of money, as cited by Semenya (2014). This is supported by Koyana (1980), who gives giving another perspective on the amount of ikhazi by stating that it ranged between six and ten head of cattle on average. Semenya also alludes to the fact that the bride price has increased over the years. The amount of lobola depends on a lot of factors. These are, for example, education, and the girl's status in terms of her virginity, as stated in Semenya and in Koyana. After the lobola negotiations are completed, a maternal uncle of the bride takes the bride to her in-laws, as mentioned by Mokwana (2009). The girl goes to the husband's home where she will present gifts in exchange for the bogadi/bohadi. Monyakane (2016) further indicates that these gifts are household items that are intended to enable the couple in beginning their married life.

The discussion presents challenges in terms of how language is used when speaking about matters relating to African marriage. This is supported by Denbow and Thebe (2006), who outline how many Europeans oversimplified the complexity of the rights and obligations transferred in the passing of bogadi by wrongly interpreting it as a form of commodity payment – the "purchase" of a wife, which brought into play the commercialisation/capitalisation of the practice of bogadi. This could be attributed to assimilation of Western culture; the language used to describe the practice – translations of what the act is may seem like a purchase in the Western context – an exchange of goods means buying and selling or bartering and trading. The extent of the misunderstanding of lobolo is extended by Makama (2020) who outlines three points, firstly that there is more to be said about lobolo based on the dominant view thereof through a Eurocentric lens, which limits us from seeing the nuances in this practice, therefore making lobolo misunderstood in terms of its function and significance in contemporary society. This author also mentions how the current scholarship on lobolo does not deviate from the early scholarship that represented lobolo as a problematic African practice that has been used to oppress women in the name of culture. Lastly, Makama (2020) speaks about the little attention given on the process of lobolo as a site for the performance of gendered identities and negotiation of power. This brings numerous problems to the phenomenon since Europeans have had the power to tell African people's stories, resulting in the broken telephone effect where the story is told after being interpreted and distorted along the way.

Damages

Damages are a part of bohadi, as indicated by Mupotsa (2014). This is supported by Mokwana (2009), who states that the payment counts among what is destined for the magadi. This author outlines how damages are paid for deflowering the prospective bride. This concept is extended by Mupotsa (2014), who further indicates that the process of lobola includes negotiations that follow pregnancy outside the marriage when the couple does not intend to remain romantically involved. This author indicates that this is where the child in question acquires position and legitimacy through the compensation given to the woman's family. In terms of the position of the child in question, Monyakane (2016) outlines how, through the process of bohadi negotiations, the child belongs to the paternal side of his family. Mupotsa (2014) also adds that children born inside the marriage belong to the patrilineal kin. From these statements, it is evident that the

children in Basotho culture will belong to their patrilineal kin when damages or bohadi are given to the woman's family.

Law From the African Perspective

A relationship between two people is entered into for a number of reasons depending on the context in which they find themselves. This also applies to how a relationship will eventually translate into marriage. For black people in South Africa, marriage has generally been, and still is considered as a union between families as opposed to just between two people who marry for romantic reasons only as one would have it in a Western-oriented context. Mulaudzi (2013) alludes to the logic of marrying into families rather than individuals by stating that the interest is extending the lineage of the two families through bearing and rearing children. This brings us to the motivation for polygamous marriages where African men have multiple wives in order to have as many children as possible. Polygamy in South Africa as type of marriage based on deep cultural values is also not exempt from condemnation when viewed through the lens of Western values and morals. This is supported by Rodney (1973), who states that prevailing African customs such as polygamy were attacked without reference, for example, to their socioeconomic function. Rodney also states that, monogamy, which is a Christian principle as a facet of European capitalist society, is antithetical to polygamy which, as mentioned, takes a group (families) into consideration.

When South Africa was colonised in 1652, every tribe had a traditional leader, which is a chief. This is still the case in some parts of the country although they do not hold a lot of power mainly because of colonisation. Seedorf and Sibanda (2014) agree, stating that, before colonisation, traditional leaders performed all functions of government, including dispute resolution. A chief is responsible for the administration of his respective tribe such as ensuring the registration of marriages. Pilane (2002) alludes to the fact that a chief ought to exercise his powers within the framework of the customs and laws of the Batswana, which can also be regarded as being applicable to other African ethnic groups in South Africa. Furthermore, the chief applies administration through hereditary headmen, who are in charge of a defined residential area (Pilane).

In addition to the role of the chief in the administration of law, elders generally have great influence and power over their children. Elders are not only biological parents, but they are also

13

uncles, aunts and other elderly members of the community. These figures prescribe how children ought to carry themselves until they are married. Parents also have the responsibility of helping their child to find a suitable partner, chosen for strategic reasons. This is not to say that their involvement ceases when someone is married, but they are also the first point of reference if an intervention is required in many instances. The absence of parents could invalidate a marriage. A husband is responsible for his family and a chief is responsible for his tribe or village, as indicated by Pilane (2002). This author further states that, according to Batswana culture, cases or matters in the village are presented to the tribal authority and no one should take the law into their own hands.

The Validation of African Marriage

The variation between modern/"white" and traditional wedding practices often rests on legal instruments for validating and legitimising matrimonial relations. Historically, South Africa has inherited multiple legal structures for regulating marriage. Law, as such, provides the symbolic order that authenticates nuptial relations between people (often a man and woman but this has, in recent history, been extended to recognise same-sex unions). If marriage is understood in the broad and general sense as the legally and formally recognised binding together of two people in a relationship that is personal, then the observation of matrimonial rituals such as a wedding must not only recognise but also reflect traditions and customs of the people entering into the union. It is therefore important to understand customary law and common law in the South African context because they are the validating aspects of the marriage.

Ndulo (2011) outlines the definition of customary law as the following:

> Customary law is the indigenous law of the various ethnic groups of Africa. The pre-colonial law in most African states was essentially customary in character, having its sources in the practices and customs of the people. In a typical African country, the great majority of people conduct their personal activities in accordance with and subject to customary law. It should be appreciated that the use of the term "African customary law" does not indicate that there is a single uniform set of customs prevailing in any given country. Rather, it is used as a blanket description covering many different legal systems. These systems are largely ethnic in origin, and they usually operate only within the area

occupied by the ethnic group and cover disputes in which at least one of the parties to the dispute is a member of the ethnic group. (p. 88).

It can be deduced that marriage for black people is characterised by a variety of customs which are unique to them to which they subscribe as a requirement upon entry to the given union. These customs are not generic, rather similar in practice across different ethnic groups and regions. These customs validate and legitimise African traditional marriages as supported by the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998, which states that a customary marriage must be negotiated and entered into or celebrated in accordance with customary law. This is extended by Herbst and du Plessis (2008), who state several requirements for a valid marriage. These requirements are consensus between the parties, a formal ceremony for the transfer of the bride, and the lobolo/bogadi payment. It is important to note that these customs follow a formal process and require adherence to protocol, as stated by Semenya (2014). This author also states that negotiations must be conducted in writing and necessitate the presence of both families. The Government Commission on Native Laws and Customs of 1883 outlined ukulobola, one of the key customs of getting married for black people, as a contract between the father of the intended wife and the prospective husband, as given in Koyana (1980). This speaks to the legitimacy of the practice of lobola. As such, this agreement is valid and legitimate in the eyes of the law. An example is in the case of *Tsambo v Sengadi* where the legitimacy of the marriage was questioned upon the passing of the former's biological son, who was the husband to Sengadi. The courts concluded that the marriage was valid because certain customs were observed and, as such, constituted a marriage. Tsambo took Sengadi to court because he claimed that his son was not legally married to the defendant, Sengadi. I raise this discussion because South African people find themselves influenced by Western culture, which can cause confusion/a clash in terms of what is legal/legitimate, valid and what is not when coming to marriage.

Rautenbach and du Plessis (2012) list three marital regimes that are available as options to African couples. A civil union, under the Civil Union Act 17 of 2006, notes that same-sex couples were not taken into consideration by the dispensation of family law in terms of enjoying the status, benefits, and responsibilities that couples in opposite sex marriages have. Another regime is a civil marriage, regulated by the Marriage Act 25 of 1961 and by common law principles. This applies to monogamous, heterosexual couples, regardless of their cultural

15

background. Yarbrough (2015) notes that the 1927 Native Administration Act (NAA), which enabled formal registration of marriages belittled customary marriage because a civil marriage nullified the legal validity of any existing customary union. This is supported by Makama (2020) who outlines that this act differentiated what it termed a "marriage" and "a customary union entered into by Africans. Makama (2020) expands the negative impact of the legalising of black people's marriages in the past by citing Brandel (1958) who outlines that marriage has a clear legal definition; the act or acts which complete a marriage have been legally established, as well as the act or acts by which a divorce becomes a fact. Brandel (1958) as cited by Makama (2020) explains that a customary union at those times, at least in the Transvaal, had no such clear legal beginning, nor end. Makama (2020) cites Harding (2019) who outlines that these multiple laws presented a challenge in terms of African people's legitimacy/validity where their marriages are concerned as they are undermined. The states failure to recognise black people's customary marriages leaves the affected individuals vulnerable and without any legal protection as stipulated in Makama (2020).

Denbow and Thebe (2006) outline that a civil law union for Batswana in Botswana usually includes a Western and a traditional component; the former encompassing an exchange of vows at the District Commissioner's/ Magistrates Office and, in some instances, at a church as well. In terms of the church ceremony, couples go through Christian counselling and exchange Western-style wedding vows, which are translated into Setswana. Moreover, the church ceremony requires the presence of witnesses, the exchange of wedding rings, and a kiss at the end of the ceremony, about which, Denbow and Thebe note that the public display of affection was considered unthinkable in front of parents and elders.

Customary law has always been in existence before colonisation. The documentation, education, knowledge sharing in African societies is not Western in terms of its dissemination. This is a result of Western knowledge superseding other forms of knowledge production and dissemination. This is supported by Yarbrough (2015), who notes the difficulty of having little written evidence of records in the colonial period, except records of colonial bureaucracies and oral interviews of children of this era. As a result, the entry of Western culture misappropriates its validity. This is evident in the application of the positivistic approach to traditional law, which Bennett (2004), Chanock (1989; 1991), and Myers (2008) assert is claimed as customary law,

based on indigenous practices, as cited in Yarbrough (2015). The Western-centred definition of customary law is given by Comaroff and Roberts (1981) as the legal principles followed in customary courts in dealing with disputes which lead to litigation.

Another definition that ought to be understood is that given the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998, which stipulates that customary law is the customs and usages traditionally observed among the indigenous African peoples of South Africa. This act also gives the definition of customary marriage as a marriage concluded in accordance with customary law. These are broad and vague definitions and, as mentioned, there is an over-reliance on Western culture which has an influence on how African cultures are practised. The vagueness inherent in these definitions makes it difficult to apply the law consistently.

Yarbrough (2015) notes that the 1927 Native Administration Act (NAA), which enabled formal registration of marriages, belittled customary marriage because a civil marriage nullified the legal validity of any existing customary union. The belittling of customary marriages can be attributed to the fact that the NAA is a Western form of marriage registration. This Act gave limited recognition to wives of customary marriages, as stated by Herbst and du Plessis (2008). These authors further outline that The Black Administration Act (BAA) of 1927 controlled and managed black people's affairs under racist conditions. This Act gave the same provision that the NAA gave; the allowance to conclude common/civil law marriage but customary marriages were not recognised.

Lastly, Herbst and du Plessis (2008) note that African marriage customs have evolved and have been modernised – which is a characteristic of Western influence. Herbst and du Plessis define customary law which takes into account Western influence is given by these authors as follows:

> [customary law] denotes all those legal systems originating from African societies as part of the culture of particular tribes or groups that have been maintained, supplemented, amended and or superseded in part by changing community views and the demands of the changing world, contact with societies with other legal systems, contact with and the influence of other legal systems, and the direct and indirect influence of foreign (non-indigenous) government structures (p. 3).

The definition given by Herbst and du Plessis (2008) is characterised by an acknowledgement of the influence of colonisation on indigenous customary law, which was already in place pre-colonisation. The definition also implies the effectual changes in indigenous customary law. These authors also state that customary law is used in contrast with common law; the latter is not used in its traditional Anglo-American sense but refers to South African law based on Roman Dutch Law and English law, as amended by legislation. This influence is characterised by modernisation, which, as stated by Herbst and du Plessis, is an indicator of colonisation. Maldonado-Torres (2007) supports this assertion by stating that modernity is a product of the European Renaissance or the European Enlightenment, which has a darker side, in that it would not be possible without coloniality, and coloniality continues to be an outcome of modern discourses. The entry of influence mentioned in points *c* and *d* above was through colonial force; the contact with societies with other legal systems mentioned in point *b* was predominantly Western in this context; moreover, the changing community views and demands of the changing world are Western directed. An effectual result of these is that African culture evolves in the direction of Western culture and not of African culture; therefore, the evolution of African culture is based on Western terms. Second, this creates an over-reliance on Western culture to determine African culture, which can be attributed to the factor of the black–white dependency, as stated by Biko (1987). Biko outlines this complex: among other factors, blacks were made to feel that the white man was some kind of God whose word could not be doubted. Biko further outlines that this was done through missionary work and the type of education adopted. The position of the complex of the coloniser and colonised is extended by Fanon (2008), who states that the relationship is correlative in that the colonised is inferior and coloniser is superior.

The description mentioned of cultural oppression in Africa does not exclude South Africa. Black people were formerly oppressed through imperialist apartheid systems. The main aim of which was to sideline them physically and oppress them as a result. Ahluwalia and Nursey-Bray (1997) refer to Fanon's (2008) seminal ideas on the role of colonialism, by pointing out that it is not possible for one to distance oneself with respect to colonialism, without at the same time taking it on with respect to the idea that the colonised holds himself through the filter of the colonialist culture. This view is supported by Maldonado-Torres (2007), who outlines that a feature of social classification is having a relation between the vertical character as opposed to it

being horizontal. This means that people relate and see themselves in hierarchical order (vertical), and not as equals (horizontal). This being a result of social classification. What is being expressed here is that people relate and see themselves in hierarchical order (vertical), and not as equal (horizontal). This being a result of social classification. For Maldonado-Torres, some identities (white), depict superiority over others, and such superiority is premised on the degree of humanity attributed to the identities in question (black). The tone of one's skin colour is often used as a marker to determine the boundaries of humanity. The "lighter" one's skin is, the closer to full humanity one is, and vice-versa (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 244). This strategy has been predominant in marking the contours and the evolution of global coloniality. As Maldonado-Torres argues, the conquerors kept reproducing this vision of things when they took on the role of mapping the world, and the whole world was practically seen in the light of this logic. This brings us to the prevailing pattern of coloniality which is analysed and differentiated from colonialism by Maldonado-Torres (2007), who states:

> Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day (p. 243).

This speaks to the compromising of African culture and the inclusion of white culture with regard to wedding conduct, which forms the premise of this paper, that coloniality and imperialism continue to compromise African culture. Twenty-nine years into democracy, cultural imperialism, neo-colonialism, and coloniality continue to prevail and black people still find themselves in systems which continue to have them at a disadvantage. This study highlights the nuanced residue of oppression which lingers in society and how this residue plays itself out in wedding conduct.

Césaire (1972) suggests that, if one follows Mannoni (1956) (who writes on the psychology of the Madagascan colony) this proves that colonisation is based on psychology. This meaning that colonisation was successful through indoctrination. As did Biko (1987) and Fanon (1986), Césaire (1972) also deduces that there are groups of men who suffer from a dependency complex – these are the colonised people, in this instance, black South Africans. Césaire (1972) outlines that the dependency is needed, craved, asked for, and demanded by the colonised. These are expected results of being dependant. In the absence of the superior coloniser, the colonised will have no form of reference in terms of how to be, Therefore, the colonised assume the identity of the coloniser – the absence of the coloniser results in a crisis for the colonised, as suggested by Fanon (2008). Fanon (2008) who also critiques Mannoni's work does so by stating that when the Malagasy has succeeded in forming relationships of dependence with his coloniser (who suffers a leadership/authority complex), the inferiority of the Malagasy no longer troubles him: this is as per the creation of the racist who creates his inferiority.

Yarbrough (2015) outlines the importance of paying attention to the impact of law on marriage as it relates to family matters. This author advocates that this relationship is contingent because there is an interplay between relatively powerful regulating institutions and relatively powerless regulated people. This relationship is more complex for black people, since there are various institutions regulating marriage: common law, customary law and religious laws, which are intersectional in their administration, as suggested by Yarbrough. Yarbrough cites Griffiths (1986), who refers to this phenomenon as legal pluralism. As mentioned, the impact of the existing legal pluralism is that the application of law is never consistent because the interests of the affected people are often conflicted, as suggested by Yarbrough. This is supported by Rautenbach and du Plessis (2012), who state that when interpreting the law (common, customary, and/or religious) where Africans are concerned, courts tend to take "fair" decisions regarding whether a marriage is valid. Fairness, in this regard, is subject to the discretion of the court and the circumstances of the affected people. An illustration of this point has been given by these authors:

> The applicant (MM) was married to the deceased, HM, in accordance with customary law. Their marriage was concluded in 1984 before the enactment of the Recognition Act and was not registered at the office of the Department of Home Affairs. Without the applicant's knowledge, HM married a second wife (the first respondent, MN) in 2008,

also according to customary law. The second marriage was confirmed by the headman of MN's village but did not comply with section 7(6) of the Recognition Act requiring court approval of a written contract regulating the matrimonial property system. The second marriage was also not registered. After HM's death, the applicant attempted to have her marriage registered but was informed that the first respondent also claimed to have been married to the deceased. As a result, the Department of Home Affairs refused her application for registration. The applicant approached the High Court for an order declaring the second marriage null and void. The first respondent, however, argued that her marriage was "properly and publicly performed, in accordance with customary law" and that it was, therefore, legally valid (p. 761).

Rautenbach and du Plessis (2012) state that, in this case, the court applied a remedy by analysing the wording of the Recognition Act which places customary wives on equal footing in terms of their status as wives. The court then analysed and concluded the case based on four arguments. First, the second marriage was invalid based on noncompliance with section 7(6) of the Act, which stipulates that a husband who is already a party to a customary marriage must obtain the court's approval of a written marriage contract before concluding a second customary marriage. Second, the second marriage was concluded without the knowledge or consent of the first wife; therefore, the court gave an opinion based on the fundamental rights of both of the wives to integrity and protection from abuse (emotional and material); the right to be treated equally, as stated in the Recognition Act; and the right to receive support from the husband. The suggestion, therefore, is that the first wife's rights could have been infringed upon. The court could not, however, decide on the matter of consent of the first wife because it does not give any guidelines in that regard. Third, the first marriage produced children, whereas the second one did not. As such, the rights of the children from the first marriage were considered. Lastly, noncompliance with section 7(6); the mandatory provisions of this subsection cannot but lead to the invalidity of a subsequent customary marriage, even though the Act does not contain an express provision to that effect. This is followed by the positivistic approach followed by some family law lawyers. Legal positivism is referred to by Mautner (2005), as cited in Rautenbach and du Plessis, as the theory that the law depends for its validity on the state and that the only

21

legitimate sources of law are (depending on the legal system of a given country) legislation, judicial decisions, common law principles, and other officially recognised sources of law.

Rautenbach and du Plessis (2012) illustrate that the positivistic approach applied by the courts is not ideal in situations where black people are married in accordance with their indigenous customary law and culture. This approach can also cause tensions in instances of polygamous marriages which are still common in South Africa because this approach will favour one party and prejudice the other party, which does not consider the long-term interests of customary wives. One can deduce that there are no clear-cut regulations in terms of how the law is applied in this regard, which is questionable in that it speaks to inconsistencies in application. Yarbrough (2015) notes that this causes a range of innovative responses developed by those targeted for regulation – which as mentioned, disadvantages other parties. It is an area of contention because it speaks to the ill development of laws which will essentially be implemented inappropriately as a result – mainly on black Africans. Moreover, a positivistic approach is not ideal in dealing with such matters because of the context in which common law is applied in South Africa. Referring to this example, the second wife was prejudiced as a result – she had no knowledge of the previous marriage. The court outlined common law remedies for the second wife as an unrecognised wife. The constant application of a positivistic approach continues to disadvantage certain parties, which is also because they got married through customary law and not common law.

Yarbrough (2015) refers to an intervention by Theophilus Shepstone which influenced customary law, bringing about the introduction of a marriage law enacted in 1869. This act is notably in conflict with the previously flexible practices in these societies because of the Western-centric character it embodies. This author further notes that this statute-imposed regulations such as the public consent of the bride, the registration of the consent in writing by a colonial or customary official, and a limitation to ten number of cattle transferable for a commoner bride's lobola (plus one beast for the mother). Posel and Rudwick (2014) and Yarbrough outline that the number of cattle is now understood as cultural rather than a colonial prescription. This speaks to the miseducation of black people, particularly in terms of how colonisers have taught black people to practice their culture by introducing foreign cultural standards.

In terms of the responsibility of black people as actors in their own circumstances – accepting to be regulated or controlled; it is important to understand how they gave up power in instances such as Shepstone's introduction of a marriage law. First, Merry (2000), as cited in Yarbrough (2015), outlines how one should note that there is an instantiation of the authority of state law which is a defining feature of the social landscape. Second, it is crucial to consider how compliance was coerced. Yarbrough (2015) also states that this was achieved through using violent measures, although violence would not always entrench authority in the eyes of the colonised African, which speaks to resistance. Although some black people were complicit in action, some were oblivious to the colonial oppression of their culture. Others were resistant but complied as a means to avoid violent measures being applied to them. Yarbrough notes that different colonies applied different measures and approaches in terms of managing customary law. These approaches included Western regulatory bodies; Yarbrough gives examples where the Cape Colony granted magistrates discretion to apply customary law. The Transvaal established a system of magistrates' courts that were allowed to apply customary law in civil disputes among Africans but refused to recognise customary marriages or lobola agreements on the grounds that they were repugnant to civilisation. Yarbrough states how the various ways of the colonies of recognising customary law were attempts to extend colonial authority by co-opting existing indigenous systems into the colonial apparatus. This makes it seem like a favour or like being saved by oppressors, resulting in the dependency complex of black people to white people. Yarbrough notes the difficulty presented in researching the impact of state law on families because of the different ways that the law was applied in different locations. Denbow and Thebe (2006), who write about Botswana's culture and customs, state that households form the basis for the political structure of the kgotla and customary law. The application of law rests on age and marriage status, as suggested by Denbow and Thebe.

The Construction of Gender Roles

Gender is a social construct, this means that it is created, maintained, and perpetuated by society through norms, values, beliefs, and practices. This thought is extended by Makama (2020) who cites West & Zimmerman (1987) who state that gender is socially constructed by individuals regarding what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. Moreover, gender as a social construct, shapes and influences how people relate with each other. This is

supported by Lorber (1991) who states that gender is created and recreated out of human interaction" as cited in Makama (2020). Moreover, the creation and recreation of gender is through socialisation and reinforced through discourses that are embedded in cultural, religious, political, and other institutions such as marriage (Makama, 2020). Society also imposes expectations in terms of gender performance. This means that the expression of gender is context-dependent and by acknowledging this, one should be able to understand the expression of gender by black people in South Africa in consideration of their cultural contexts.

Part of the social life of African people can be understood as encompassing various rites of passage towards adulthood. In this case, marriage, which, according to Mulaudzi (2013), is the key institution among Africans around which the entire social structure revolves. Pilane (2002) states that initiation is regarded as the transition from boyhood into manhood and girlhood into womanhood with all its privileges and responsibilities. Given the fact that black people getting married encompasses several customs or rites of passage, the education of young girls and boys can be regarded as preparing them for marriage. Phenomena worth noting are the initiation schools and other customs such as ukuthombisa for Ndebele girls. Initiation schools are referred to as koma (Sepedi/Sesotho), vhusha/murundu (Tshivenda), byale (Sesotho), ubukhwetha (Xhosa), bogwera (Setswana), the purpose of which is to educate and mentor young men regarding the values, traditions, and norms of their tribes (Mokwana, 2009; Mulaudzi, 2013; Pilane 2002). These authors further state that ditšwabuthuhu (Sepedi), musevhetho (Tshivenda), mosebetho (Sesotho), bojale (Setswana), is an initiation school for girls where they too are educated about morality and given lessons on improving the quality of their womanhood in order to take care of themselves when they are married. Initiation schools do not only provide the freedom to get married, but they also offer a man an opportunity to attend kgotla regularly (Pilane). Mulaudzi states that, among Venda people, there is a combined institution for girls and boys referred to as domba. Even with the introduction of colonisation, which intended to annihilate African culture, black people still have institutions and practices that are appropriate and relevant for children in their respective societies to prepare them accordingly for adulthood. Mulaudzi also notes the impact of colonisation on the lack of inclusion of knowledge offered by institutions such as koma and ditšwabuthuhu in Western curricula. As a result, the lack of adoption of such programmes adds to confusion regarding the institution of marriage.

Mokwana (2009) gives one example of a traditional marriage custom which is the fact that, traditionally, men are polygamous. This author also indicates that the Christian lifestyle has influenced how many have converted and abide by the principle of having one man or wife. Mokwana also indicates that, traditionally, choosing a spouse was the task of parents, but modernity has influenced how people choose a partner. The father, husband and man of the house has always been considered to be the head of the household and responsible for all his dependants (Pilane, 2002) including his wife. In the case of the wife, there are expectations of competency to perform general domestic duties in the house. Moreover, there is an expectation in terms of her character which is to be respectful and humble.

White Wedding

The main components of a white wedding are specific to the rituals that are performed in the type of ceremony with easily identifiable features: a white dress, a suit, bachelor/bachelorette parties, speeches, the wedding march, the preacher, and the father walking the bride down the aisle, as some examples. The organisation of a white wedding is more formal and fancier, and typically happens over a single day, so white weddings are generally associated with order. A white wedding is characterised by the above given components. A white wedding is traditional as has to be considered as such, however, this traditional wedding does not originate from South Africa. The acts carried out in a white traditional wedding are a symbol of western culture. This is supported by Barnes (2014) who frames this as a traditional wedding which began in the United States in the 1800s. Barnes (2014) outlines that the practice gained popularity from upper classes and the tradition spread to other classes and races. Mupotsa (2014) echoes this view where she recounts a conversation, she had with a wedding photographer who described a white wedding as public marriage ritual, elaborately decorated and featuring catering, florists, photographers and a beautiful white dress, and not only rooted in something racialised as white, but also about consumption. Traditional weddings on the other hand, have different type of processes, the events are carried out over a number of days. These events are such as patlo, go laya, lobolo, damages, and umembeso for example. The African traditional aspects indicate an old-fashioned incorporation and practice of the entire event. Maldonado-Torres (2007) supports this assertion by stating that modernity, as a product of the European Renaissance or the European Enlightenment, has a darker side, being that it would not be possible without

coloniality, and coloniality continues to be an outcome of modern discourses. This is supported by Mupotsa (2014), who states that having an elaborate white wedding for a black person is rooted in being racialised as white. Mupotsa (2014) also concludes that such a process is less about the white wedding itself but more about consumption which signifies an entry into modernity. Mupotsa (2014) outlines how the marker of citizenship of modernity is consumption, which is performed in the white wedding.

A white wedding is a Eurocentric manifestation of wedding rites, which has become the ingrained norm given how dominant and pervasive Eurocentric culture is. The reason that it has become the norm is partially a result of how far colonialism extends beyond just territorial occupation. It also affects how the colonised see things and what they perceive as normal. What colonialism has done is entrenched in the minds of African people. This is to the point of making the existing traditional wedding seem like a deviation from the norm. The fact that we specify what a traditional marriage is to distinguish it from the white wedding means that it is not perceived as the norm at some level. The apartheid era, as in any other colonial state, resulted in the oppression of black people, which causes conflict between the identity and culture of the formerly oppressed. This is supported by Ahluwalia and Nursey-Bray (1997), who state how the existence of post-colonialism as a body of theory indicates the continuing nature of the problem of empire and identity. These authors further indicate how pervasive and ubiquitous the filter of colonialist culture is in an era of globalised cultural formation. Finally, these authors indicate that colonialism and empire are not limited to territorial occupation, but to consciousness, how the colonised is constructed both in the mind of the subject culture and of the hegemonic culture (Ahluwalia & Nursey-Bray, 1997, p. 4). This is evident in the focus of the proposed study, which is aimed at understanding how sociopolitical events/issues have influenced the current state of how black people approach/conduct weddings.

Theoretical Framework: Afrocentric perspective

The researcher adopts Afrocentric theory as a theory and a paradigm. Afrocentrism emerges from the works of many African scholars (Cobb, 1997). However, Molefi Kete Asante is credited as the main proponent of this perspective (Anderson, 1995; Bush, 1989; McPhail, 1998; Vora, 1995; Nyahunda & Tirivangasi, 2021). As the main proponent of Afrocentricity, he has four core works: Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change, Afrocentricity, Kemet,

Afrocentricity and Knowledge, and The Afrocentric Idea. The Afrocentric idea is employed as an ideological standpoint (Karenga, 1993; McPhail, 1998), a corrective project (Walters, 1996), a philosophical movement (Anderson, 1995), a nationalist movement (Cobb, 1997; Collins, 1998), as well as an epistemological and methodological approach to African discourse and cultural phenomena (Akbar, 1998; Asante, 1983, 1990b, 1993). Afrocentrism is, to some theorists, "what makes black studies 'Black" (Azibo, 1992, p. 66). It places Africans and the African diaspora at the centre of every research enquiry, literally, placing African ideals at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior (Asante, 1987, p. 6).

Asante (1987) explains, "all analysis is culturally centered and flows from ideological assumptions". This involves awareness of oppression, heritage, history, language, lifestyle, culture, religion, ideals, and literally hundreds of other sensitivities to the question at hand. Asante notes:

> The Afrocentrist seeks to uncover and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data. Such a method appears to go beyond western history to re-valorise the African place in the interpretation of Africans, continental and diasporan (p. 6).

Asante questions the utility and validity of applying a Eurocentric approach universally to groups whose ways of living and knowing do not originate from European paradigms (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1988, 1990b, 1996; Collins, 1991; Woodyard, 1995). These scholars reject European particularism as universal and point to the fact that this methodological elitism places Africans and other non-Europeans) and negates, ignores their discourse, cultural perspectives, social conditions, and historical realities. Using Afrocentrism, the centering of African history and culture, seeks to challenge Eurocentric intellectual practices while at the same time presenting a more balanced perspective (Asante, 1983; Cobb, 1997; Wonkeryor, 1998).

In this study the researcher believes that Afrocentric perspective is useful as one need to be wearing the African lenses to understand marriage in the African context. Afrocentric theory values history and culture of a people. In this case marriage is engraved in the African history and culture. This makes Afrocentric theory to be very relevant for this study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to gain an understanding of the context of matrimonial rites in the South African context and how this collides with the incorporation of the white wedding. There is extensive literature on matters relating to African traditional marriage and the white wedding in South Africa. However, there is a notable gap on academic knowledge regarding the specific ways in which colonisation has impacted black people, particularly on their marriage rites. The literature collected suggests that colonisation has had a profound impact on the psyche of black people when getting married. This also includes the erasure of their traditions and customs. Ultimately, this study seeks to enable an intuitive understanding of how colonisation ubiquitously impacts black people's lives, and to inspire further research on black people's marriage practices. Africana Existentialism and the Afrocentric framework were described to locate and contextualize the study theoretically.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains a discussion of the methods that were carried out for this research. The study is qualitative as it seeks to understand people's opinions and experiences. This chapter covers the research paradigm, techniques of generating the sample, data collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations, and researcher positionality.

Epistemological and Paradigmatic Choices: On Afrocentric Canons

Mazama (2001) argues that the Afrocentric paradigm contends that the main problem of African people is centred on the unconscious adoption of the Western worldview, perspectives, and their antecedent conceptual frameworks. This means that African people tend to adopt invasive terms of reference of what is deemed normal, natural, and ideal in explaining the parameters of how the world should be viewed. These frameworks of the world that are alien to the African experience are commonly legitimised as more acceptable. Mazama (2001) rather contends that the Afrocentric paradigm rests upon our ability to displace European ways of thinking, being, feeling, and so forth systematically, and to replace them consciously with ways that are germane to African cultural experience. This is because the experiences of African people tend to be viewed in terms of Eurocentric norms, and not those of African people. This can lead to unintended consequences such as pathologizing and discrediting African people's experiences.

The key idea in Afrocentrism is epistemological centredness which, according to Asante (1991, cited in Mazama, 2001), establishes a frame of reference in which phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. This is often a shortfall of other paradigms which often lead to a miseducation regarding Africa people's experiences. The Afrocentric paradigm consists of five canons which are important and traditional in African cultures. These principles, according to Reviere (2001), are necessary for proper and more complete construction and interpretation of knowledge.

The first canon, Ukweli, can be understood as truth grounded in accordance with the community being studied. In this study, it means that the participants were the drivers of the

knowledge produced in this research as they are the final arbiters of the validity of the research having made pronouncements about their own lives. Participants were therefore regarded as agentic beings in that they are the authors of their own narrative.

The second canon, Kujoita, entails emphasising considerations of how knowledge is structured and used over the need for dispassion and objectivity. This essentially means that research should not concern dispassionate or value-free ideals, which are usually considered to contribute to objectivity. The principle of Kujoita first concerns the positionality of the research. It then demands the articulation of the positionality of the researcher. This means that the researcher ought to make explicit their own interest in the research and how their own personal experiences have shaped interest in the research phenomenon. The principle of Kujoita in the Afrocentric paradigm emphasises how the researcher ought to address possible personal obstacles to enable a fair interpretation of the data (Reviere, 2001).

Another Afrocentric canon, Utulivu, speaks to the concept of justice which requires that the researcher should avoid creating, exaggerating, or sustaining divisions between or within communities, but rather strive to create harmonious relationships between and within the group (Reviere, 2001). This is relevant to the study as it is based on community ideals, which means that the group shared ideas particularly on black people's values. This canon also speaks to how race ought to be considered as contributing to the contextual standing of the knowledge to be produced. Essentially, race has a relationship with the theory and affects how the story will be told.

The fourth canon of Ujamaa recognises the need for the recognition and the maintenance of community (Reviere, 2001). This, in essence, means that the researcher is required to be inclusive of the participants in the process of knowledge production.

The last canon, Uhaki, requires that the procedure is fair to all participants and that their welfare ought to be taken into consideration (Reviere, 2001). In this study, this meant that the researcher was required to treat the participants with dignity and respect, ensuring that they were comfortable and did not have an experience that negatively impacted their well-being. This paradigm enables the researcher to critique the phenomenon from the perspective of African people's initial experience, the practice of traditional weddings. It also enables the researcher to centre the participants since this is a key principle of Afrocentricity. This was done by premising

African people's indigenous experiences and using the traditional weddings as the frame of reference and the white wedding as the unaccustomed phenomenon.

On Matters of Method and Research Process

In order to account for questions of method and how they find application in this study, it is crucial to describe the research process that was followed and to discuss the techniques utilised for assembling the unit of analysis, collection of data and data analysis framework.

Assembling the Sample

The location for the sampling of participants was in South Africa where anyone who fits the required criteria had an opportunity to participate. The participants were black people who were currently married. These people participated as individuals, not as couples. One member of a marriage took part – as such, their spouse was automatically excluded from the study. This is because the aim of this research was to gain an understanding of how black people as a collective, and not as couples, feel and think about this phenomenon. Married individuals were chosen based on the fact that they were expected to be able to provide a reflection of their experiences as opposed to a mere opinion on the phenomenon which anyone else could present. The criteria for inclusion of participants were black individuals married to a black partner. The way the participants got married was through a white wedding only, a traditional wedding only, or a combination of both a white and traditional weddings. They spoke about their experiences. Purposive sampling was used to recruit the participants. Etikan et al (2016) describes this method of sampling as a deliberate method of choosing participants due to the qualities that they possess, and these participants suited the purpose of the study. Moreover, Etikan et al (2016) states that technique does not need a set number of participants and that the researcher decides what needs to be known and finds people who can and are willing to provide the information needed by the researcher by virtue of knowledge or experience of the participants. The recruitment was done through a poster advertisement on the social media platforms of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp. This poster was shared by people in the researcher's close networks and was responded to by willing participants. The participants gained a general description of the research on the poster and more detailed information was sent after contact had been established. Invitations with the specific date, time and session links were sent once recruitment had been done.

Data Collection

One focus group was conducted with six participants. This focus group comprised of one male and 5 females (see Table 1: Names and Gender Details of Participants). The intention of choosing a focus group was to spark conversation about the topic at hand and to allow participants to elicit what is more important to them regarding the research problem. Furthermore, a single focus group is sufficient as the method of analysis (critical discourse analysis) focuses on language and text. This is echoed by van Dijk (1993) who stated that the theory and practice of critical discourse analysis focus on the structures of text and talk. This means that even a single conversation, which in this case a focus group, is sufficient.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, considerations were made to reduce the spread of the virus through maintaining social distancing. The focus group session therefore took place via a virtual video conference chat. This was done through the Microsoft Teams platform. I created a link using the platform and shared the link via email with the participants before the focus group. The participants were able to join the session using the link provided. The focus group was important to establish an understanding of how black people in general have been affected by this phenomenon. This includes an understanding of shared ideals and differences regarding wedding conduct in members of the black community who have faced similar challenges and racial injustices. The focus group was more conversational as opposed to having the researcher constantly ask questions. This conforms with the notion of ubuntu where conversational style is highly regarded. It consists of features such as feelings of tolerance, hospitality and respect for others, their language, and opinions, as suggested by Mkabela (2005).

I only probed when I gauged extreme levels of digression of the topic. The probing was based on particular questions to guide the conversation (see Appendix D: Discussion Guide). I took some notes during the discussion in order to refer to them later. Furthermore, I took a recording of the conversation in order to listen to it and transcribe it. The conversation was in languages in which the researcher is fluent, which are English, isiZulu, and Setswana. In addition, participants used their preferred indigenous languages, these being Sepedi and siSwati, in order to express themselves better and to make reference to some marriage practices. This is supported by Mkabela (2005) who states that African ideals and values, including language, should be a legitimate frame of reference for collecting and interpreting data. Participants explained what

they meant and provided translations for each other when they used languages besides English. This is supported by Chilisa (2012), who suggests that indigenous research methods should explore ways of making research a partnership between the researcher and the researched. The use of different languages is justified by the fact that the participants are black and the conversation at hand concerns cultural and traditional issues which are best spoken about and referred to in indigenous languages. I translated in cases where indigenous languages were used in the transcription and reporting of this study.

Data Analysis: A Critical Discourse Analysis

A dialectical–relational approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA) was employed for this study. Fairclough (2013) outlines how CDA is critical in that it aims to contribute to addressing the social 'wrongs' of the day by analysing their sources and causes, resistance to them and the possibilities of overcoming them. As such, this method of analysis is appropriate for this study since the main issue is looking at how colonial injustices have affected how black people in South Africa think, feel and behave about conducting weddings.

CDA, according to Fairclough (2013), analyses and seeks to explain dialectical relationships between semiosis and other social elements to clarify how semiosis figures in the establishment, reproduction and change of unequal power relationships. In this case, to establish how colonisation has affected the culture of black people in ideological processes and how, in more general terms, it has bearing upon human 'well-being'. This author further states that these relationships require analysis because there are no societies whose logic and dynamics, including how semiosis features within them, are fully transparent to all. Hence, I chose to use this method of analysis as it has enabled me to analyse the logic and dynamic of why black people incorporate white weddings into their wedding practices. The critique is oriented towards analysing and explaining, with a focus on these dialectical relationships, the many ways in which the dominant logic and dynamics are tested, challenged, and disrupted by people, and to identifying possibilities suggested for overcoming obstacles to addressing 'wrongs' and improving well-being.

Dialectics is a concept/philosophy that has been in existence for centuries with its central idea based on dialogue. This dialogue involves opposing parties who are attempting to find the truth about a given matter. When in a conversation or argument with someone, where opposing ideas

are present, which are true, we consider that to be dialectics. This system of reasoning passes through three stages: the thesis, antithesis (which negates the thesis), and finally, a synthesis. The thesis is the starting point of the dialectical movement, which would present inadequacy as a vantage point and will obviously lead to opposition. The presenting opposition, which negates the thesis is referred to as the antithesis, the second stage of the dialectical movement. Finally, the thesis and antithesis must come together as an incorporation to make progress, which will produce a synthesis. The factor of truth is fundamental to dialectics because the thesis and antithesis are both partial and one-sided truths (Collier, 2008) as they are essentially perceptive. Collier (2008) further outlines that the resulting synthesis does not imply a full truth, but rather a fuller view which incorporates elements of truth of the thesis and antithesis. The synthesis will also be a partial truth which will form the starting point for a new dialogue which will be subject to contradiction as well. Progress essentially ought to go through a dialectical process.

Fairclough (2013) states that semiosis is an element of the social process, which is dialectically related to others, hence, a 'dialectical–relational' approach (p. 290). For Fairclough, CDA analyses and seeks to explain dialectical relations between semiosis. In relation to this research, the focus is on what does a white wedding signify for black people and how are these elements dialectically related to each other, for example.

There are four guiding stages when conducting a dialectical–relational approach to CDA, with further steps within some stages.

Stage One: Focus Upon a Social Wrong

This stage speaks to the incorporation of Western practices, and their semiotic aspects, into African traditional weddings. This stage has two steps, which involve selecting a research topic relating to or points out a social wrong and which can be approached productively in a transdisciplinary way with a particular focus on dialectical relationships between semiotic and other 'moments', as stated by Fairclough (2013). Fairclough also suggests that the stage involves constructing objects of research for the research topic by theorising them in a transdisciplinary way. The topic has been chosen and focuses on how colonisation impacts on how black people get married. This research has been theorised by integrating theories in a transdisciplinary way through looking at how political events and the history of colonisation has an impact on culture, using a lens of black people from an Africana philosophical existential framework.

Stage Two: Identify Obstacles to Addressing the Social Wrong

During this stage, I asked participants why black people continue to incorporate the white wedding. I carried out an analysis of dialectical relationships between semiotic and other social elements that play a role in the incorporation of the white wedding. These elements are based on the discourses I obtained from the participants. The analysis is categorised, and interdiscursive.

Stage Three: Consider Whether the Social Order 'Needs' the Social Wrong

This stage concerns considering whether the phenomenon can be addressed or changed as it can contribute potentially to other social wrongs, which can, for example, have a negative impact on black people's culture. The power relations between the discourses, therefore, are explicated in terms of how the white wedding has continued to be incorporated into black people's weddings and whether this will continue since it has an effect on black people's cultural practices.

Stage Four: Moving the Analysis from Negative to Positive Critique

In moving the analysis from negative to positive critique, I identified how black people contest or defy the act of incorporating the white wedding – and furthermore, identify how they do not allow it to have a negative impact on their culture and identity. The respondents explained how they keep their heritage and culture alive without compromising it too much. This, in essence, concerns how black people resist coloniality.

Ethical Considerations

The University of South Africa mandates that all research inquiries should be subjected to ethical scrutiny by the institution's research committees. Institutional ethical approval ensures that the study is credible and meets all the required standards to ensure that the safety and well-being of human participants is guaranteed. Therefore, as a mechanism to safeguard both participants and the researcher, ethical clearance to conduct the research was sought from the Department of Psychology's Research Ethics Committee.

Given that the research is located within an Afrocentric paradigm, African-centred ethics are also important to take into consideration. Chilisa (2012) posits that African-centred ethics are premised upon the understanding that there is a need to know and apply ethical issues and legislation that protect indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing the colonised other.

In the spirit of ubuntu, I encouraged the participants to respect and appreciate each other's viewpoints and to collaborate with the rest of the group regarding the topic at hand. At the start of the focus group, rules of engagement were established by me and the participants as a collective, where the group agreed on how the conversation should occur. A collective sense of ethics was employed in this research in that I, together with the participants, would appreciate the importance of all individuals in the research group, taking into account the potentially diverse dynamics of the different individuals in the group. This is supported by Goduka (2000, cited in Chilisa, 2012) who outlines ubuntu as "I am we; I am because we are; we are because I am". Chilisa further notes how the group has priority over the individual without crushing the individual. This can also be regarded as the principles of Ma'at, which concern the quest for justice, truth, and harmony (Reviere, 2001).

The participation was that of informed consent, meaning that participants were notified regarding how the research would be conducted, their involvement and role, the recordings and data capturing as the conversation progressed. As mentioned, rules of engagement were established by me and the participants as a collective, which can be regarded as group consent. Consent forms were also given to the individual participants before the focus group. The forms were given to all participants. One participant, who was not comfortable with signing gave verbal consent. All participants were also notified about the nature of this research since it touches on issues of race and identity. As such, the participants were notified about the sensitivity of this topic and how these issues can cause tensions in the conversation and among individual participants. A participant information sheet was shared with them for this purpose as well. This sheet gave the participants a detailed understanding of what the research is about before it commenced.

Another consideration made is that research is part of a very complex (community) whole, as suggested by Chilisa (2012). Therefore, I also considered the fact that all things are interconnected, such as the spiritual aspects of wedding ceremonies and how they contribute to the bigger picture of what a wedding is about. This was also utilised as an opportunity to learn about differences in other people and to understand and respect these differences, which can be regarded as the Nommo principle, referring to the creation of knowledge as a vehicle for improvement in human relations (Reviere, 2001). Lastly, I was respectful towards the

participants as they were older than me in the respect that they are married, in order to maintain harmony and balance of the group, as suggested by Mkabela (2005). This speaks to my positionality, where I avoided imposing my personal and subjective views and opinions regarding the topic to the participants. This again concerns the principles of Ma'at, as articulated by Reviere (2001). According to these principles, the research exercise itself must be in harmony with the stated aims and objectives of the researcher.

Some of the participants indicated that they wished to be anonymous. Pseudonyms were assigned to them in order to protect their personal information. Moreover, the participants used their real names to introduce themselves in the session. This was discussed with the participants, and they were made aware of this limitation in terms of hiding their real identity. For participants who wanted to be identified, the opportunity to do so was given and they are referred to using their real names in the analysis. This is because they are considered to be collaborators in the research and not mere participants who only give information. This is supported by Roos (2008, cited in Chilisa, 2012) who speaks about the mmogo method, which includes co-construction as one of its principles.

The participants were notified that the research would be an opportunity to speak about this issue of interest. It would benefit them in that they would have a meaningful conversation regarding the identity and culture of black people. Also, about the production of knowledge systems of black people since the information the participants would share would be produced as a scientific dissertation. Upon conclusion of the research project, a copy would be given to each of them. This is to show appreciation for their contribution to this project. Because the participants were required to join the discussion virtually, they were reimbursed for their internet data costs. This was also in order to show appreciation for their participation. I managed the participants by admitting them into the virtual meeting when they were joining using the link provided prior to the meeting. This provided a safety measure as no one could attend without my approval.

With regard to the fact that a wedding is a major life event for most people, and the experience as such is subjective and close to the individual, I respect every individual's experience. The participants were given an opportunity to withdraw at any stage of the research process and were assured that no negative consequences would result if that happened.

Participants' personal contact details were not shared. They will be stored in the researcher's cell phone and laptop, which have passwords known only to the researcher. The recordings can only be accessed and stored by the researcher – access will also require a password only known to the researcher. Participants' names are known only by the researcher and pseudonyms were assigned to them unless otherwise agreed to with the participants, as mentioned. These names can also be accessed by use of a password known to the researcher only.

Reflecting on Researcher Positionality

The phenomenon of black Africans incorporating white weddings when getting married caught my attention in that I noticed the strain black people take when getting married. This strain that black people experience is evident in the various discourses discussed in the presentation of results chapter. Moreover, I wanted to write my dissertation concerning black people, from their perspective. Best practice was employed in terms of interpreting the participants' narrations rather than my own agenda. This speaks to the principle of Kujoita in the Afrocentric paradigm, which emphasises how I ought to address possible personal obstacles to enable a fair interpretation of the data (Reviere, 2001).

My personal experience as a black researcher in undertaking this research has been emotional because it has pushed constant reflection on how colonisation has so severely impacted the psyche of black people. As a member of the black community, I have found the conversation to personal at some level, since I share similar experiences in terms of oppression my life experiences as a black person, according to my readings, and the accounts of the participants. I acknowledge that my own experiences and perspectives are inextricably linked to the narratives of the participants. My existence is marked by the legacy of coloniality, and I am intimately familiar with the weight of coloniality. As I engage with the stories of formerly oppressed black people, I recognise the ways in which our collective histories intersect. This could have presented as an obstacle, but I believe it has been an advantage because I have insight into black people's lives through my lived experience as a black person. I have, however, managed to distance myself, according to the principle of Kujoita, in my data collection and analysis because Although I am not yet married, I was able to seek out and illuminate the impacts of coloniality on black people in South Africa when getting married. Moreover, I have contributed to the

ongoing process of decolonization, not only on an academic platform, but in my own psyche as well. By acknowledging my positionality, I was able to create a space for authentic dialogue.

Conclusion

The various aspects that have been applied in terms of research methodology have demonstrated its relevance to the research problem. Moreover, these methods were applied practically, which ensured the success of this research. In conclusion, Africana existentialism and the Afrocentric framework has situated me in terms of how black people ought to be studied. This has required me to reflect and to apply relevant research methods in an attempt to not pathologies the participants in my study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of this research inquiry. The various discourses are generated utilising dialectical critical discourse analysis method outlined in the previous chapter are presented and exemplified through empirical information from the interview data.

Description of Participants

This section contains summaries of the discourses that came out of the focus group, supported by verbatim statements made in the focus group session. The focus group had six participants. Some of these participants have pseudonyms, whereas some consented to have their real names used for reporting on the results. The following are the names and gender details of the participants of the focus group.

Table 1: Names and Gender Details of Participants

Name	Surname	Gender
1. Siyabonga	Shungube	Female
2. Kgomotso	Ndwandwe	Female
3. Agi	Ulypu	Female
4. Neo	Mawela	Male
5. Nkateko	Baloyi	Female
6. Nokuthula	Mthimunye	Female

Discourse One: Dialectical Relational Outcomes in Marriage Conduct

Colonisation has consistently been provided by participants as the main driver behind the double consciousness experienced by black people. This is confirmed by Kgomotso, who said the following:

> Kgomotso: *…So, I feel that uhm, South Africa, us as South Africans black people are starting to take an interest in going back to the traditional way of doing things and they want to move away from the white wedding. But then that*

> *colonisation aspect also comes in to say our minds had already been adjusted to think in that certain way.*

Coloniality[1] is evident where the participants indicate that they cannot simply do away with Western practice as it is still in their midst. This is supported by Agi, who made the following analogies to social bodies and systems:

> Agi: *It's in the systems, wena* [you] *Masechaba. It's like saying, okay, we have a quota of 90 black people now studying in universities. But then the setting of the university does not necessarily accommodate black people, so the systems; I mean as the other speakers have spoken about; if I'm going to get married, maybe in my culture, like exactly how it's supposed to work, will I be able to like the system… does it recognise me, for me to be even for me to be alive? My kids to be protected? There is so many things in the systems in – our systems – or in the way of running things that makes it difficult to say, OK, no, this is white things or Western things, I'm not going to do them because then after that, if you do that, if you decide gore (that) OK 100%, I'm not doing this. What does it mean in terms of your children, your surname? You know, wills and all these things. What does it mean? Do we even have information on what, you know the African way of doing things was, do we still know what was happening that time in terms of the children in terms of you know, if I was to die and all these things, so the system will say are you married akere* [right]*? And you know everything that you sign, are you married? No, I'm not married, so this is what it means. Uh, if you are single, this is what it means. If you do not share the same surname with your child this is what it means, so the system has already sort of put things in boxes where you have to choose what box you're going to do in as much as you can.*

In the quotation above, Agi laments the difficulties the societal cultural norms present to individuals. Apart from living one's life, culture demands from people different things for

---

[1] Coloniality, instead refers to long standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, Coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of people and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe Coloniality all the time and every day. (Mpofu, 2013, p. 107).

instance, one needs to get married. Once one is married, her children attain her husband's surname. In the absence of such, Agi questions what are the implications? The western norms do not value marriage in the same way as traditional South African way, so if one behaves in a western way chances are that there are implications and harsh treatment from the society. Agi's statement regarding the difficulty in doing away with Western practice is supported by Siyabonga, who said the following:

> Siyabonga: *As much as we're here now, talking about colonisation and I understand it. But if I'm just being honest. I still want to have the white dress. And I still want to have the beautiful decor. I still want to stand in front and have these beautiful vows that I either memorised or uhm, I wrote them down myself and have the speeches where everyone is talking about how happy they are for me and have the cake.*

The narrative that is emerging from Siyabonga reveals that despite how people may engage in traditional marriage rites she still prefers a white wedding. This shows that even though black people are aware of the insidious effects that colonisation has had on their psyche, they still adhere to colonial norms. Even though back people recognise these ongoing struggles, they inadvertently perpetuate the very oppressive norms and standards that they are aware of. These may be difficult to do away with as it is now structurally set in the minds of young black women and men. This shows that culture is not stagnant, but it is forever evolving and changing. In this case the infiltration of the western practices is undeniable.

Duality of Marriage Ceremonies Stemming from Double Conscious Existence

Duality of Marriage Ceremonies stemming from double conscious existence is noted as a sub-discourse to Dialectical relational outcomes in marriage conduct. Here participants either explicitly explain or vacillate to the current state of affairs by looking at the history of oppression and its impact on marriage conduct. In the initial part of the conversation, after being probed with the question: Why do we (black people) incorporate white weddings or Western practices into our ceremonies or when getting married? Neo responded to the question by stating the following:

> Neo: *I think it's more historical in a sense that when the white – the Europeans, came to South Africa or to Africa in general, they came as colonisers. And through colonisation we got to have what's called white supremacy, whereby their own*

customs, cultures, and values, were imposed on us as being superior. Our own
customs and cultural practices, then they were seen as being subordinate or inferior
to those of the Europeans. And because the argument of the European was that I'm
coming to Africa to bring civilisation, and as time went on for Africans to be seen
celebrating what's called a white wedding has to be seen as being civilised. As a
result, I think our forefathers, then, throughout the whole time or period of
colonisation, started incorporating these things as to our customs.

In this rich narrative above, Neo brings an especially important development that happened to African as result of colonisation. Anthropologists calls acculturation, "Acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between cultural groups and their individual members. Acculturation follows migration and continues in culturally plural societies among ethnocultural communities" In this sense, even though white populations was never dominant in terms of numbers, the dominated in terms of rule. The majority of South Africans were subordinates hence it is easy for Black people to adopt the western cultural practices. The western rule was dominant in every sense; hence, every dominant group can infiltrate another because majority of the people looks up to the leaders to take a lead in everything. Consequently, black people copied or were forced to follow western practices in conducting marriage practices that are recognised by the law. Neo brought something important to light, the issue of civilisation, as modernity arrived with the colonisers so did the western norms and value also infiltrated the society. For instance, if traditional marriage is not recognised by courts, then people who wants to wed have no choice but to follow the western norms of doing things.

Neo's statement alludes to the fact that our forefathers started incorporating Western practices into our customs and sums up what has happened by briefly referring to history which, he indicates, resulted in white supremacy. Neo's assertions on colonisation are supported by Nokuthula. Where dialectical reasoning is concerned, Nokuthula clearly states how inadequate a response to the same question would be if we did not go back to how everything started. The following is Nokuthula's statement touches on the history of practice:

Nokuthula: *The more I thought about this topic, I realised that you cannot fully*
comprehend everything without going back to how everything started. How

we actually got to where we are right now. Because the way in which we get married right now is different to everyone else. But I think the core of it is that as a Motswana, as a Ndebele, and Zulu, there is certain practices or rituals that you would be told about. It's up to you that you are going to make sure that to those things happen or they don't…Uhm our way of life right now dictates the way in which we're going to get married.

Participants also spoke on how much of traditional and white ceremonial practices have been incorporated. The in-depth narratives from the participants reveal that you cannot do away with the culture that has already been adopted. This is now constant with democratic dispensation in South Africa. The law in South Africa allows everyone to have the freedom of choice with regard to marriages. It is not a matter of being forced to conform but one has the liberty to choose traditional marriages or white marriages.

This speaks to what the output will look like where the participants present a similar logic in their accounts. Kgomotso reflects on her experience as follows:

Kgomotso: *My wedding was actually 90% Zulu and I can say 10% white. I'm saying white because by the time I wore my nude dress, which was not even white, I was technically married already. Everything had been done traditionally and the modern aspects of my wedding was just for us to have a formal seating so that people can have food in a formal set-up and just for the pastor to bless the day or bless whatever has happened. Just to bring light into how I got married; is first we had the lobola which was at my house and then it got followed by umembeso, where the groom's family would dress our family. And then my lobola was in 2018, late 2018 around October. My umembeso was in 2019 in March and then my umabo. Umabo, which was my traditional wedding, was literally what sealed the deal, basically. Where I went to esigcawini to do the dance like Siyabonga mentioned, we also need to do that in isiZulu. Uhm, we did not have vows as in terms of a white wedding but there there's what is called Inkosi* [a king]. *So, the king, uhm came as a representative to stand up to ask me if I love my husband, which took place as vows and an agreement in front of everybody. So that's basically how we did*

our vows. So, by the time we went to the formal tents with the formal setting,
the whole wedding was technically done. Hence, I'm his is asaying that it in
my situation it was 90% traditional and just that 10% I could say is white, but
we didn't even look at it as a white wedding. We just wanted a more modern,
more civilised. If I can put it, set-up, Ja [yes].t

The above transcript reveals that modernity pressurises black people, particularly in terms of conforming to standardised wedding formats. This is because they had a traditional wedding, but they still feel that ten percent has to assimilate so white wedding elements. This shows that in spite of how colonisation is looked at, one cannot deny modernity a chance as people and their culture are always changing. In terms of choosing how much of the traditional and white ceremonial aspects are chosen, Nokuthula also recounted her choices:

Nokuthula: *Just to bring some light into how I got to get married, uhm during the day or*
like in the morning, I had a full traditional wedding like in terms of attire,
rituals, gifting ceremony, slaughtering of cows, everything and then it was
only in the afternoon that I decided that, you know what, I would like the
pastor to be there as well and then bless our marriage and exchange of vows
and the rings, and the likes. And you'll see that even my attire had to change,
because now it has to be fitting, because obviously the two are not the same.

From these reflections, we can clearly see that aspects of the white and the traditional wedding are present. The participants had two types of ceremonies in one day. For Nokuthula it was a matter of personal choice, she wanted a pastor to bless her marriage but at the same time, she had a full traditional wedding. She even recognised the need to change attire because she notes the difference in these two cultural wedding practices. This shows that there is duality in terms of cultural and religious practice. Moreover, this is also a reflection of the impact of acculturation and modernity on traditional conduct of marriages in Africa. Culture inevitably adapts, this is evident in the constant change of norms and values of society. However, the evolution of culture is dominated by western values. The switch between these norms is done with an acknowledgement of coexistence of conflicting cultures. This also speaks to their identities where there is intersectionality in terms of how black people see and express themselves. As South Africa adopts modernity there are now other cultural aspects that have

been accepted before which are no longer followed today. Nokuthula's narrative is a true reflection of how black people navigate duality of how black people celebrate their marriage unions.

Discourse Two: Societal Pressure and Community Sentiments

Social pressure is present in most facets of society. This also includes matters of getting married or relationship/family building. This is where we see family members and community members who are stakeholders exerting pressure and expectations on the couple. Kgomotso reflected on part of her journey when she stipulated that there was a requirement for the presence of a king, who came as a community representative and asked Kgomotso if she loves her husband. This took place as vows and an agreement in front of everybody who was in attendance. This pressure exerted on participants by parents, family, in-laws, and the community is also captured by Nkateko, who made the following statement:

> Nkateko: *The other thing I think that is also a challenge is, you know. parents, wherein you know they want to do things a certain way…You know because it's a family thing as black people, you know when you are getting married, is for the family, the whole family. So now you get pressured because people impose their ideas, you know, their decisions and all those things. So, I found that seriously challenging wherein you need to find a balance wherein you respect your elders as well as doing something that you really want to do.*

Nkateko's statement is supported by Agi, who said the following:

> Agi: *In other cultures, it's more about the bride and the groom. But then our weddings, sort of is more of a societal thing or community thing…You don't necessarily think about the marriage and the two people that are going to get married.*

With specific regard to the various roles all stakeholders play, Neo's contribution about African spiritualty contained the following statement:

> Neo: *Go tshwanetse go be le malome* [there must be an uncle] *on the side of the lady, and then gobe le rakgadi* [and an aunt]*. Those two people, there are certain roles that they play, and those roles are more spiritual than anything because rakgadi ya ngwana* [the aunt to the child]*, there are certain rituals tshwanetse di*

performiwe ke rakgadi ya ngwana malome wa ngwana [that must be performed by the aunt and uncle].

Social pressure is also evident in Agi's reflection when she said she was going to do the white wedding as a result.

Agi said the following:

Agi: *Uh, I'm feeling like, you know, you did all the processes, or you honoured your parents 'cause for us mostly parents would say I want to see a big tent in my yard, so it's more of our want other people to see that my child is getting married, and they managed to do this thing, right. And then in my experience 'cause I didn't have a white wedding, I had traditional wedding only and I wore a purple dress so that did not meet any standards by any. And so, but then the reasons why I did that, I think I only, I was going to do the white wedding only because of the pressure of feeling like OK, my parents want to do it, but I wasn't necessarily interested in doing the white wedding. Uhm, it was more of the social pressure, and you know other people you know, telling you or but it will be nice. Why wouldn't you want to do that? You're going to regret it and then also just that pressure or feeling like you need to make everybody happy.*

Siyabonga also mentions that her parents expected the separate full-day white wedding event which, according to them, means that one would actually be married.

Societal pressure also comes indirectly through social media. This is mentioned by Nokuthula:

Nokuthula: *The societal pressure you know, the fact that when you look at Instagram, number one, what is trending there are obviously these lavish, glamorous white weddings, you know, even if it can be a traditional wedding. But you see the modernisation thereof is like top tier and people are just looking as stunning, and not to say that that is wrong – I'm just trying to come to the point where obviously what's advertised on Instagram is that lavish part of things."*

In terms of how participants feel or respond to internal pressures and conflicts, Nokuthula mentioned, in the following statement, that she wondered what not having certain aspects of white wedding would mean:

> Nokuthula: *I did feel like; will people take me serious because I did not have the whole ballroom gown white with uhm you know, bridesmaids? Am I even married? If I did not do that, it had to be my decision. Actually, you know too. I had to accept and say this is what I want for myself.*

Dialectics of wedding aesthetics.

How black people think of and have experienced their ceremonies in terms of dress and aesthetics is another discourse that was discovered.

Siyabonga shared that she wore the following:

> Siyabonga: *For example, I had isiphandla, and yeah, isiphandla that skin it's a, it's a cow skin that they make. And then I put it on my wrist… And there was another activity on the day where bathi ba ngicokisa isidwaba* [they said they would clothe me in isidwaba]*…So, I had isidwaba, where my in-laws bought for me that I they had to put me on, sort of. It's a way of them saying bangi welcom'a* [they're welcoming me] *as a bride to the family. So, they were supposed to put it on me, right? But on the day when they're putting it on me, and I had to take off my top part. I was wearing ihiya. It's that cloth, the red cloth. Sometimes it has Mswati, if you can imagine it's got Mswati's head.*

Similar to Siyabonga, Kgomotso said she wore the following:

> Khomotso: *A circle of the older women of the family ko strateng ba ntsotse* [undressed me in the street]*, like they covered me so that I could take off my Setswana attire and put on what they deemed to be a Zulu attire. The explanation of the outfit that they put on me is basically a dress or a skirt that's under my knees, something to cover my shoulders, a doek or tuku* [a headwrap]*, just as a representation of what they expect me to look like as a Zulu woman. If I go into their yards, this is the kind of outfit that I am expected to wear, so that that is what happened ka [during] membeso… inyongo or the one that I had on, uh, it was just, I'm not sure what it was, but I know that it was for the*

48

ancestors and just to introduce me to their ancestors that I am also now a
new member of the family. I'm also now part of a family.… Oh, I also wore
isidwaba. Isidwaba and inkehli. Most people know inkehli as isixolo.
Isidwaba and isixolo is in Zulu culture, is only worn by married women. So,
for me on that occasion to wear isidwaba and inkehli was to represent that I
am now no longer a girl. But I am married woman.

Nkateko shared her view on the colour of the white dress. She said it symbolises that one is complete and pure, as indicated in the discourse about religious imperialism. The colour of wedding dress was scrutinised by participants with some reflecting on the colour they chose for their dress. The deviation from this is expressed in Agi and Kgomotso's choice of dress colour, where Agi wore a purple and Kgomotso wore a nude-coloured dress.

Siyabonga noticed the act of combining African traditional clothing with a white wedding dress, which is common, in the following opinion:

Siyabonga: *So, I just feel ukuthi [that], you know, with globalisation we must just*
remember ukuthi [that] we, it just feels like we're taking a little bit of this
and a little bit of that because if you look at the white wedding itself, people
are now even moving away from the traditional white wedding dress. And
now wear their white dress with a nice shweshwe material on it or whatever
culture they have and they wear like uh, stripes or whatever it is. So that for
me just tells me ukuthi [that] it's a mix of, you know, you wanna be, you
wanna still feel like you're traditional but you still want to feel like you
know you're doing this white wedding. So that's that conflict; it's a horrible
conflict.

Nkateko had the following contribution to make in terms of the aesthetics of a white wedding and its impact:

Nkateko: *You know wherein our mindset has been changed. You know, we don't see*
beauty in our own, you know, cultural dresses in our own cultural practices or
traditional practices. But then now you know these, white or Western, you
know, way of doing things. It is projected as something beautiful wherein we
don't see our own culture, our own dresses, our own way of doing things as

beautiful. So, I think it came with that wherein our mindset as well, you know, when we're looking into beauty, we're looking into those glamorous things and we see our cultural way of doing things not as beautiful as you know, the Western way of doing things."

Neo relates the phenomenon of perceptions of beauty with white supremacy in the following statement:

Neo: *Going to…eh…the question of beauty again, I think not that I think, but I know I've seen that as a result of colonisation and the impact of white supremacy, eh, to the black mind or to the black consciousness is that we've been taught or conscientized to see beauty through the blue eyes of the European, not through our own African eyes. And you look at things like hair for instance, for your hair to be beautiful as an African, for the longest time, your hair was not beautiful because it did not match up to the standards that white people have placed upon us, so eh, on that question I would say that our weddings are beautiful. We can make, we make our weddings beautiful and because of that colonisation and subjugation of our traditions and cultures we see our traditional weddings – I don't like using the words traditional but for distinction purposes. I will continue with that.*

Kgomotso contends that black people are conscious of their beauty and act in defiance of the trends of embracing Western modernity in the following statement:

Kgomotso: *Uh, sorry to take you guys back, but I'm still on that. That Instagram point where it was mentioned that…Where it was mentioned that white weddings are more glamorous on Instagram. But I see a trend of that changing where the Instagram audience, especially in South Africa, is starting to get interested in in traditional weddings. A recent example is that Tamaryn Green wedding. People were so astonished about the Zulu culture and how she married traditionally. Also, in my personal experience, I received, more engagement on the traditional aspect of things on the traditional side of my wedding to a point where there was an article on Isolezwe, there were blogs asking me like why did I choose traditional and all of that. So, I feel that uhm, South Africa, us as South Africans black people are starting to take an*

interest in going back to the traditional way of doing things and they want to move away from the white wedding. But then that colonisation aspect also comes in to say our minds had already been adjusted to think in that certain way. It also goes back maybe to Miss SA where, through the years, you know, we were used to like white people winning this type of person with this type of hair and this type of skin colour is crowned as a Miss SA, but now we're seeing people ka di chiskop [with bald hair]*, people with natural hair like we are now more interested in going back to who we really are. And it also goes back to saying what does the future look like?*

Nokuthula challenged Kgomotso's view since she thinks that even though black people have been conscientized about oppression in terms of beauty, they still embrace Western standards of beauty and the fact that this must be documented, is an indication that the conscientisation is not enough. This is shown in the following statement:

Nokuthula: *I wanted to say and then just to pose maybe a question uhm, not to Kgomotso per se, but to everyone here, but the fact that, Kgomotso with your traditional wedding; Isolezwe had to write that document, it could also be interpreted that it's because it doesn't happen as often as we would like it. They're trying to allow, bring or shed some light into actually – we actually can get married this way and it can be glamorous and beautiful. I mean, look here is a, another wedding that just actually happened and then they need, they feel they need to actually write about it so it can also be interpreted that as much as, yes, we are seeing black people now getting married traditionally. It's not at the rate we would like it to be, like we're not 100% fully aware that we are – just it's enough to just have a traditional wedding.*

Nokuthula is supported by Neo, who doesn't think that our culture is evolving, in the following statement:

Neo: *We might say other people might argue that culture is evolving, but I don't. I don't see that. I don't think that our culture is evolving. I think that our culture is being, to a large extent, suppressed. Even though there is that rising consciousness. So, I think in the next 50 years or so there will be more black people that opt to have*

their own weddings with the so-called traditional – what we say is the traditional
weddings and modernising or having a modern traditional wedding in a sense.

Discourse Three: Legal Discourses

Issues of legality came out of the conversation where participants showed uncertainty in terms of what constitutes a valid marriage. Nokuthula enquired about this issue of the group by asking the following question:

Nokuthula: *At what point are you married? Is it after dowry or is it after the celebration*
and the food, or at what point? I am not an advocate of white weddings. I just
want to understand because this is something that I just want people to know.
At what point are we actually married? Again, is lobola being married?

The conversation regarding legal confirmation of a marriage continued to come up where some participants showed that they know that a traditional marriage also constitutes a valid marriage. This recognition was pointed out by Neo, who responded by saying the following:

Neo: *We do have customary law, but the problem with customary law is that it is still*
subject to the civil laws. Remember, because our cultures are very diverse in South
Africa, the customary law only serves to give guidelines as to what is recognised, or
how it is recognised as a customary marriage. But the problem is that when such
disputes arise out of whatever cultural negotiations that were had between the two
families in entering the marriage relationship; they are going to be decided based on
white values. So, the customary, law to a large extent, does not protect or view our
marriages in a proper light because they still measure it according to white
standards. So that's my problem with the customary law.

Siyabonga, however, indicated that customary law also has its own technical requirements which will confirm that one is traditionally married:

Siyabonga: *Because it's quite technical, you know? Uhm yeah, someone is saying ukuthi*
[that] they did, you know this whole process and like it was a full day and
it's a quite technical process here. They tell you about the goat skin that you
must have. That must be dried a day before. If it's not, it's not going to
work…uhmm... there's a spear that you must have, you know, there's a
shield, it there are many things that you must do. The whole thing is quite

technical, and if we are not socialised into it, then I'm just scared ukuthi
[that] will end up just really losing it in the process. I feel we're actually
heading more towards that direction of us losing it, Ja [yes]*?*

Discourse Four: Religious Imperialism

Participants spoke about going particularly to the Christian church and conducting rituals and customs that are relevant there, as the religious aspect of the wedding. Nokuthula mentions that we are in a Christian country and that Christianity is also a driving force in terms of social pressure. This, according to her, influences the way in which someone will decide to get married. Neo mentions that Christianity came with the people who colonised us, which brought existing traditional norms into question and not recognised because they are not Christian. This is supported by Agi, who relayed her experience:

Agi: *We joined a church. It's a Christian church, I think it's from Australia. So, then the*
pastor kept on insisting that we just tie the knot and we're like…uhmm…yeah, we're
Christian and all, we know what the Bible is saying but we just wanted to do things
our own way. We wanted to honour who we were and there was this pressure from
the pastor, and I remember us being firm and saying no, we're going to pay lobola.
It's like, Oh yeah, the demonising of the African culture that's happening in
Christian churches where it's more of because of lack of understanding. They are
just looking at it as these people are ripping you off, you need to, you need to just go
and put the ring and forget about everything. And people are ripping people off, but
then also there is that demonising of you know our culture in saying, you know you
can just do this. I will marry you guys and you will be married and nothing else, you
would be free of sin if that's what you're going to be doing. So that is how my
experience was, and we ended up having to say no this is how we're going to do it.
And even after that I realised that, there was a switch and a shift in how they
engaged with us even after getting married. So, the idea there, I think it was just like
just get married. But then when we went wanted to do it our way, post that, there was
a bit of a shift in how the engagement was, they wouldn't really sort of engage us
much because I guess we didn't follow what they wanted, but then we were married.

African traditional customs being stigmatised is supported by Neo who speaks more on African spirituality, its clash with Christianity, and its significance:

Neo: *On the spiritual clashing of the cultures, I think…uh…to an extent there is a clash in a sense that, because the so-called white weddings are viewed as being more superior than the traditional wedding, then the spiritual aspects of the traditional wedding, tends to become overlooked. Ka Sepedi* [in Sepedi culture]*, for instance, O ka se nyale, waba le lenyalo O se wa hlaba kgomo* [you cannot get married without the slaughtering of a cow]*. Re batho ba kgomo, re nyala ka kgomo* [We get married using a cow] *and there are certain spiritual aspects that the cow e slaughteriwang* [a slaughtered cow] *represents. First of all, there's the introduction or connection of the respective families' ancestors. And go nale go kopanwya badimo* [there is also the connecting of the ancestors] *and because you find that in many, in the Christian religion, there are those that say that, the slaughtering of cows, the slaughtering of animals, the shedding of an animal's blood is not recognised in a sense to say we in that religion that's not done, and as a result that tends to diminish the spiritual aspect of our traditional weddings because now certain rituals become overlooked. Other people would just go as far as practising their religion. They will go as far as go ntsha magadi fela* [only paying lobola] *and then that's where it ends. The other rituals that have to follow that, the spiritual rituals, they are not performed. This thing to say that, go tshwanetse go be le malome* [there must be an uncle] *on the side of the lady, and then gobe le rakgadi* [and an aunt]*. Those two people, there are certain roles that they play, and those roles are more spiritual than anything because rakgadi ya ngwana* [the aunt to the child] *there are certain rituals tshwanetse di performiwe ke rakgadi ya ngwana malome wa ngwana* [that must be performed by the aunt and uncle]*. Going back again to the ritual to have the cow for instance; there are certain parts of the cow that have to be disseminated in a certain way. For instance, tlhogo ya* [the head of] *the cow eya ko malome* [goes to the uncle]*. And there's a reason why eya ko malome [it goes to the uncle], there's a spiritual reason why tlhogo yeo etlo ya ko malome* [that head goes to the uncle]*. Mosadi ga etla bogadi ka Sepedio tshwanetse a tle bogadi a tshwere motlhobolo* [when a woman goes to her matrimonial home in*

Sepedi, she has to come with another part of the cow referred to as motlhobolo]).
Motlhobolo is another part of the cow; there are certain things that it symbolises.
Spiritually for rena ka Sepedi [us in Sepedi]*, I find that there is a clash and if you*
go deeper into these things. Batho ba bagolo [Elders] *they would tell you certain*
problems in their marriage, for instance, they are caused or are there because
there are certain rituals that when the two parties were getting married, they were
not performed. As much as we can say, in my view, this is the kind of wedding I
want at the end of the day, ka Se Africa [in African culture] *it's not only your*
wedding, it's the bringing together of the two families and many instances when
those certain rituals are not performed, there are certain consequences to that.

Siyabonga reflected on one of the rituals which were not correctly performed. This is because sometimes African customs are done in hiding:

Siyabonga: *It's like it's more of a hidden thing. And especially for me like I said before,*
unfortunately I, I'm not that deeply rooted in terms of culture ye siSwati
[Siswati culture]. *Uhm, so some of the things I got to see them happening on*
the actual day. For me, when we're doing the dance and the Inhlambiso, so
uhm, for example I had isiphandla, and yeah, isiphandla that skin it's a cow
skin that they make. And then I put it on my wrist. And apparently, they didn't
prepare it properly, because they were supposed to slaughter the cow
beforehand, a couple of days before so they take out that part; eh, maybe Neo
knows which part of the cow. But they were supposed to take it out and then
let it dry so that by the time it is the day of the actual wedding, it dried
enough for me to wear it. So, whoever who was in charge of doing that,
apparently couldn't do it properly. So, I wore it and it was damp ne, and it
was back home, so it used to make me nauseous like it had this horrible
stench like a horror. You can't believe it. Horrible stench. And whenever I go
to bath and then you know it's even, then I make it wet then it's like horrible,
I couldn't take it. I went to my father-in-law, and I said to him, eh, I need to
go, I'm going to my honeymoon. I'm gonna catch a flight to Cape Town. Am I
going to go there with this stench on my hand. Do you know, I mean?

Nkateko is in agreement with other participants in terms of the impact of colonisation on religious practices. She goes further in terms of the extent to which Western religious practices are practised:

Nkateko: *I want to agree with the previous speakers, right? Uhm, I think colonisation played a role into us forgetting who we are. And, you know, neglecting our cultural, uhm our cultural principles. Uhm, I think, also religion played a role in that if I want to get married and my marriage should be complete, I need to you know, wear that white dress. Then, in that way, and then it means I'm pure and I'm complete. So, I think we have lost, you know our cultural practices to such a point wherein we adopted more of Western practices. But if you can look, we're not even doing like fully. We just want to do like half tradition and half Western. So, we're not practising like a full thing. We don't know where we belong. We just in the middle wherein we are doing this and that…'cause if we say it's traditional, we are doing a traditional wedding. It has to be pure traditional wedding. If it's Western then we do Western and, but we try to mix the two. And that's for me shows some, you know, level of confusion with us that we don't know where we're standing. You know, um, we want to the society to know that or you know, what what's the word? We want to prove to society that, you know, we can adopt to these things. But at the same time, we want to practise our cultural practices. But we're not doing it fully, so I think there's a confusion as well in terms of where we belong. I think we have lost our sense of belonging. That's why we want to try to incorporate the two into our marriage. Thank you.*

Discourse Five: Economic Discourses

The incorporation of Western practice affects black people more because they have additional customs, which must be adhered, naturally adding to the cost. Agi explains what currency was in the olden days and the importance of costs in traditional marriages in the past:

Agi: *In the olden days their currency was not money, it was dikgomo akere?* [cows, right?]. *It was dikgomo* (cows)*, It was dijo*[food] *and all of that. That was our currency at the time. So, I guess it was just it was a form of uhm, just being grateful and having showing gore kana [that really] we are coming in, we're going to be*

able to take care of this person that we're going to be incorporating into our family. So that was my understanding of bogadi. And then even when the family is taking these parts of the cow, right? It was just to show that these people had a part in the raising of this bride, right? So malome [uncle]*, rakgadi* [aunt]*, bo batsadi* [parents]*, like they would have all these parts that they're taking, whether it's from the cow or they're taking two cows, or they're taking a cow, or they're taking the head of the cow, it was to represent the role that they had played in the raising of this child, or even moving forward what their roles are.*

The statement by Agi is supported by Nokuthula, who says that the role of ilobola is to form a relationship between the two families. Given the fact of currency change over the years, lobola has been met with negative connotations, which Nokuthula explains should not be that way. She says the following:

Nokuthula: *We as Africans have a proverb that umuntu akathengwa [a person cannot be bought]. So, to say ilobola is to buy a woman is totally wrong and I think that, as the years have progressed, like ilobola has also. Something else needs to be that is slowly losing its, it's actual meaning. People are now doing things according to certain standards which are not correct because obviously ilobola is meant to honour the woman that you're choosing to build a home with.*

Neo agrees with Nokuthula's statement in suggesting that Europeans have intentionally interpreted the act of ukulobola because they did not want to understand it. As a result of these misinterpretations, they have demonised the act; hence, we find people saying by paying lobola, you have bought a wife.

Neo also mentions one of the biggest pressures experienced as being financial:

Neo: *Uh, many participants already alluded to the fact that you look at white weddings that are shown there on Instagram, Eh, man, it's pressure. These white weddings, they need a lot of money. For instance, you have to pay for the decor, you have to look a certain way. Uh, yeah, so I think and most predominantly financially.*

Neo's assertions about the financial burdens experienced by black people are corroborated by Nkateko, who mentioned the following:

Neo: *I think, uhm, it's also causing a lot of pressure on, you know, a couple that is getting married wherein I need to do my traditional wedding and there's money involved as well and then also do the traditional wedding, the white wedding which is also costly.*

Discourse Six: Condemnation of African Cultures

Nkateko mentions how black people have lost their roots:

Nkateko: *I think maybe what happened to us, maybe thinking that at the end of the day I must have a white wedding to, you know, qualify me as being married, it's because we have lost our roots as black people. But then other thing, I think, uhm, it's also causing a lot of pressure on, you know, a couple that is getting married wherein I need to do my traditional wedding and there's money involved as well and then also do the traditional wedding the white wedding, which is also costly. So, I think maybe where we need to go back now is to understand who we are and choose because if you have a white wedding it is also someone's tradition. So, if we can understand that I think we can move away from, you know, wasting so much resources unnecessary because if I want to have a white wedding, then I choose to do that; if I want to have a traditional wedding, then even if I had a traditional wedding, it means I'm fully, I'm qualified – I'm fully married. There's nothing wrong with that.*

Information about how traditional marriages are to be conducted has not been well documented in black society. This has presented a challenge regarding our customs and traditions and how this knowledge is disseminated where we see misinterpretations of such practices. This is supported by Neo, who said the following:

Neo: *For a long time, Europeans have been discussing our customs, especially the issue of lobola and they have been interpreting it in their own way, and, remember, they did not want to understand our culture, and as a result of that interpretation, they were actually demonising it, and that's why you have this argument that by paying lobola you are buying the wife, for example.*

Siyabonga elaborates on how information is hidden as she reflects on her marriage process:

Siyabonga: *As we were preparing for the traditional wedding, they gave us information on what to expect, uhm what we're going to do and how the day is going to be like. So, you know, most of the things were done by the elders, you know, previous speakers have to have talked about that, so most of the activities are done by the elders. They know, the uncle would do this, the grandmother will do this, whoever will do that. Mina, I'm just participating in it, so, then they tell you, OK, wena [you], this is what you'll do. But you know there's certain rituals, it's them doing it on you. You know, it's more. It's not so much of you doing it yourself; it's more of them doing it on you. So, they are the ones, the elders who know how these things work, you know. Uhm, so I feel like it's true, Masechaba, what you are saying. It's like it's more of a hidden thing. And especially for me, like I said before, unfortunately I, I'm not that deeply rooted in terms of culture siSwati. Uhm, so some of the things I got to see them happening on the actual day… So, I'm just saying it's uhm, it's hidden for me. It feels, I think that's the most sad part of it, it feels very hidden with our elders. It's like the information is there. I'm not sure, maybe as we're talking now, we can talk about that. Maybe it's us as the young generations, us not going to them for the info or it's them not giving it more clearly to us? I'm not sure where it gets, it gets lost. But it's almost as if you get to know it as you are about to get into it. You know, some of it just gets lost in the way like some of the activities.*

Nokuthula said this about culture being hidden:

Nokuthula: *It is a sort of like hidden because culture is also not without its faults. Uhm, I remember in, in my wedding, it was almost as if my husband was the one who was privy to this information. He was being taken through the why we're doing this, what needs to happen, being educated in the home because I married someone who is Zulu. I'm actually Ndebele. He knows more of my culture than me right now. Certain things I had to see from my wedding video. I didn't know that they were happening at the back of the garage because I was just like sitting in some room.*

Kgomotso thinks the remedy to the hiding and miseducation of African culture is through having elders educate us, as per her statement:

> Kgomotso: *If we want to see change in the future, we need to be that generation that says, you know what? We're not going to go with white weddings or go with their standards set by the Europeans. Sorry, long time ago we need to be that generation that says, you know what going forward, if this is what it says I'm married then this is what it is. Because if we're not willing to be that confident in, in in our tradition to say that we are married. If 1,2,3 happens, then nothing is going to change and we're gonna end up taking these past values of the white people and imposing them on our children. Which is it's just going to be a long never-ending cycle. But if; because now there's also a handful of elders in our cultures and traditions that are still willing to teach us what it means to have a traditional wedding and why this happens that way. And if we just going to take in that information and say no, but I'm still going to have a white wedding anyway, then we are not making any change in this generation and we are just keeping that cycle going.*

Neo proposes a radical remedy to coloniality.

> Neo: *Right, and for black people, the effects of 500 years of colonisation. We are still hung up on that, so we still need a complete mental overhaul for us to be able to value our own customs and traditions because psychologically, subconsciously we still, uh measure what we do against white standards.*

Neo also speaks about the significance of African culture in relation to marriage practices.

> Neo: *As much as we can say, in my view, this is the kind of wedding I want at the end of the day, ka Se Africa [in African culture], it's not only your wedding, it's the bringing together of the two families and many instances when those certain rituals are not performed, there are certain consequences to that.*

Neo also notes black people's resilience:

> Neo: *I think my basis for my arguments against or for all of this is that everything was imposed on us as a result of colonisation and white supremacy, and since then, black people we've been trying creatively, so I must say to our credit, to navigate ourselves*

and how ourselves around uh, this imposition of these different cultures. We did not

have a choice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the six discourses that derive from the focus group data were presented and supported by verbatim extracts form the interview transcripts. These results are further analysed and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the data collected through the focus group session ad presented in chapter four. The findings are examined in response to the research questions, aims, and objectives outlined in Chapter 1 which were as follows:

The primary aim of this research was to gain a critical understanding of the reasons that explain why Black people in South Africa incorporate white wedding customs in conjunction with traditional ones when conducting marital arrangements. To achieve this aim, the objectives of the study were to:

• analyse modern wedding practices among black South Africans that incorporate traditional African and Western customs,

• explore the points of tension and contradictions incumbent when conducting wedding celebrations for Black people.

• analyse how culture and history intersect to define the choice made to incorporate western and traditional customs during weddings.

• describe the intersections of race and identity in Black South African contemporary wedding practices.

In this chapter I sought out to address the research question being that "How do black South Africans justify the incorporation of white wedding practices into their pre-existing traditional wedding customs?"

In pursuit of the research aims and objectives, this chapter is organised around the key discourses that have emerged from the data which are as follows:

Discourse One: Dialectical Relational Outcomes in Marriage Conduct

Duality of Marriage Ceremonies Stemming from Double Conscious Existence

Discourse Two: Societal Pressure and Community Sentiments

Dialectics of Wedding Aesthetics

Discourse Three: Legal Discourses

Discourse Four: Religious Imperialism

Discourse Five: Economic Discourses

Discourse Six: Condemnation of African Cultures

Each discourse is explored in detail, with supporting data and relevant literature. The chapter begins by presenting an overview of the data, followed by a detailed analysis of each discourse. The findings are then discussed in relation to the research questions, aims, and objectives, and the implications of the results are unpacked. The analysis presented in this chapter is guided by the Afrocentric theory as a paradigm and a dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse analysis. These provide a lens for understanding the complexities of the research problem. The given discourses offer insight into the experiences, perspectives and meanings inscribed into the act of incorporating white wedding practices into their pre-existing traditional wedding customs of black people.

At the beginning of the focus group, participants shared their opinions in response to the question: Why do we (black people) incorporate white weddings or Western practices into our ceremonies or when getting married? There was varied responses to this question, eventually the engagement brought about general agreement to the question posed to them as they built upon each other's experiences and knowledge. The agreement speaks to the following discourses: Dialectical relational outcomes in marriage conduct, societal pressure and community sentiments, legal discourses, religious imperialism, economic discourse, and condemnation of African cultures; having coloniality inherent in all of them. These discourses are interdiscursive either in conspicuous ways, or have their nuances drawn out. It is evident that participants experience a double consciousness existence resulting from colonisation. Africana existentialism is used as a theoretical framework to explain black people's behaviour in this analysis. This chapter contains the analysis and discussion of the various discourses, using the dialectical–relational approach to critical discourse analysis.

Discourse One: Dialectical Relational Outcomes in Marriage Conduct

This discourse delves into the dialectical outcomes that emerge from the interplay between contradictory forces, and how this has shaped individual behavior in profound ways. Through a nuanced exploration of the syntheses and antitheses that contribute to dialectical relationships, I address how conflicting ideologies, values, and beliefs are reconciled and embodied when black people get married. By examining the dialectical outcomes that inform their behavior, insight into the complex dynamics that affect black people's behavior is provided.

The remnants of colonisation are understood as coloniality, which is evident in the data. This is presented as an overarching discourse of the general prevalence of coloniality. Participants have suggested the that impact of colonisation has altered how black people think and behave in general. This is according to the statements by Kgomotso, who said that colonisation adjusted our (black people's) minds to think in a certain way. Agi also related coloniality, not only to marriage conduct, but also to other social structures such as educational institutions and the law, where she describes how colonisation resides in institutions that we rely on and, as a result, black people cannot just change their behaviours or conduct. This is evident in Fanon's (1967) assertions on how, when he had to meet the white man's eyes, he was burdened by an unfamiliar weight. He further mentions how, in the white world, the man of colour encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema where consciousness of the body is a solely a negating activity (Fanon, 1967, p. 110.). Here we see how Fanon vacillates on the challenges black people face in the development of themselves owing to the negatory existential schema of the white man. Agi gave an analogy, saying a university might have a high quota of black people currently studying, but then the setting of the university does not necessarily accommodate black people.

Agi's contribution speaks to the power of coloniality and dependency. Power is, as mentioned, pervasive and, according to Rodney (1973), is the ultimate determinant in human society, being basic to the relations within and between any groups. Power implies the ability to defend one's interests and, if necessary, to impose one's will by any means available. This statement by Rodney resonates with the fact of the presence and impact of coloniality. Agi also touched on dependency, which is a facet of coloniality. As she indicated, we depend on the

current social systems in order to thrive in society and attempts to go against these systems would disadvantage black people. Rodney (1973) states that the impact of dependency is felt in every aspect of the life of the colonies and can be regarded as the crowning vice in the social, political and economic consequences of colonialism in Africa.

This speaks to the assertions by Agi, who raised a further concern regarding dependency on social systems when she asks what the consequences would be of doing away with the Western way of doing things. She questions what it would mean for her children if she were to die, or if one does not share a surname with their children, for example. This question stems from how existing Eurocentric-based social structures have a determination on how black people's lives ought to be, which Agi describes as "being put into boxes" and has, over time, resulted in dependency. The implied consequences of that would be a lack of recognition (of marriage or birth/existence), or one's children's protection in the event of their parents' death, for example. Essentially, even when presented with the desire to do away with Western practices, coloniality makes it difficult to act in a manner that is not in accordance with Eurocentric standards because black people might not have a choice in given matters.

This is borne out by Marx (1852/1907), who states that man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand. The tradition of all past generations weighs like an Alp upon the brain of the living, as translated by De Leon (2006). Colonisation is essentially so entrenched in institutions that acting against it would go against one's own interests, to their detriment. Therefore, black people are compelled to conform. On the other hand, coloniality offers an element of incentive, which makes it attractive. Conformance therefore provides incentive. This makes it easier for people to act in accordance with it long after the colonial masters are no longer in power, and these people are ostensibly the masters of their own destiny. For these reasons, we see black people as active participants in retaining coloniality because it advances their material interests within a particular system.

This assertion is supported by Siyabonga's statement when she says she would still want to have the white dress with beautiful décor, exchange vows and have speeches, for example. Conformance is suggested and we see how black people would experience joy or pleasure from conforming to standards even though they are conscious of the fact that these may be

Eurocentric, stemming from colonisation. Given the backdrop that this conformance to the incorporation of Western practice into African traditional weddings is due to colonisation, it can be said that their behaviours are not truly their determination but are a hallmark of coloniality.

Duality of Marriage Ceremonies Stemming from Double Conscious Existence

This discourse addresses the intriguing phenomenon of duality the participant's behaviour. This is where individuals simultaneously exhibit contradictory tendencies, values, and beliefs. This paradoxical co-existence of opposing forces has influenced participants' actions and decisions in seemingly unintended ways. The reason being the effects on colonisation on these individuals. The duality of behaviour is a ubiquitous aspect of the human experience, manifesting in various contexts, from personal struggles with conflicting desires, to societal tensions between individuality and conformity. This discourse digs into the complexities of this duality, examining how seemingly contradictory elements intersect, influence, and have defined participant's behaviour.

This research has produced several questions and answers which speak to the fact that the respondents exist in double conscious experiences. Itzigsohn and Brown (2020) refer to Du Bois' work regarding double consciousness and describes the concept as the subjectivity of racialized subjects. These authors unpack that Du Bois outlines the theory of double consciousness as having three elements: a veil, twoness and second sight. Itzigsohn and Brown summarise that the veil is considered as the colour line where the world is experienced differently on either side of the line, where whites in particular project their constructions of black people, which are realities that the former must contend with. Secondly, twoness is a process of self-formation of black people who must exist in two different social worlds. Lastly, second sight, which is where black people can only see themselves through the revelation of the white world, even though they have to deal with constant dehumanisation. Black people's double conscious experiences are evident in in marriage practices which have been through dialectical processes. The need to probe into this phenomenon in order to address the issue of double consciousness experiences through dialectical reasoning is mentioned by Nokuthula, who stresses the importance of looking back to how everything started because our deductions would be inadequate if we did not do so.

When probed as to why black people incorporate white weddings or Western practices into our ceremonies when getting married, Neo was able to relate the twoness phenomenon as a direct result of colonisation. He said that he thinks it is more historical through the colonisation of Africans by Europeans. Colonisation can be considered as having brought about second sight for black people which they make reference to when going about their lives. Neo's relating of the phenomenon to history also speaks to the dialectical process inherent in the current situation. This is where we would have the thesis: how black people conducted their ceremonies; the antithesis: the entry of colonisation, and the synthesis: the incorporation of Western practice in black South African traditional weddings.

Another instance when Kgomotso applied dialectical reasoning to her personal experience was when she said that most of the events of her wedding followed traditional African customs. These customs being having lobola given to her family, followed by umembeso, then umabo. This is where she explained that her process of getting married was fundamentally African. However, inherent in the process were aspects that she clearly identified as modern aspects – which provided a functional benefit such as having choreographed seating arrangements, for example. In this instance, we see how the thesis could be how seating arrangements were managed before the entry of a white wedding in African society, where the seating arrangements are less directed and left to the guests. The antithesis becomes creating choreography to the seating arrangements. Although Kgomotso indicates that her process into getting married was fundamentally through African traditional customs, she saw the functional benefit of having a formal choreographed seating arrangement for this event and went with it. Kgomotso spoke about what she considers to be traditional and modern aspects of the ceremonies. Her ability to differentiate these aspects speak to an awareness of what traditional and Western marriage practices should entail. In Kgomotso's accounts, the reconstruction and deconstruction of practice, which shows dialectical reasoning, is also evident. This process of self-formation, as per the phenomena of twoness, refers to how people choose specific aspects of the Western and African type of ceremonies that are then combined as one event(s) in accordance with what the people getting married consider to be necessary.

What is also evident is colonisation as a cause to the double practice. This is inferred from the fact that Kgomotso quantified how much of the ceremonies were Western (white) and African

traditional (Zulu) when she said that her wedding was 90% Zulu and 10% white. This reconstruction and deconstruction is also evident in Nokuthula's reflection we she alludes to how she had to act appropriately to the situation(s) she found herself in throughout the day. This is because Nokuthula had a traditional wedding in the morning and a form of a white wedding later in the day. In terms of functional benefits of white wedding attributes, like Kgomotso, Nokuthula expressed the relevance of having a pastor there to bless their marriage and the exchange of vows and rings.

There is evidence that African people have persisted with the traditional wedding and that there is that there is a desire, at some level, to preserve some of their cultural heritage which predates European colonialism and contact with the European way of life. Although black people have shown the ability to retain their cultural practices even when experiencing double consciousness; the white wedding is seen as a force pulling African people towards modernity. The force to modernity then creates the hybridity that is evident in marriage practices for African people. This hybridity, according to Nkateko, is confusing because she says black people do not know where they are standing. This can be attributed to the white veil, which is different from how black people perceive how marriage should be conducted, but black people make reference to whiteness where wedding conduct is concerned. Although black people may know there is difference across racial lines, they still subscribe to the white wedding because the white veil has power to project whiteness on black people as suggested in Itzigsohn and Brown (2020).

Discourse Two: Societal Pressure and Community Sentiments

Social pressure, stemming from societal norms, expectations, and relationships, can shape people's actions and choices in subtle yet powerful ways. Similarly, stakeholder pressure, arising from the interests and demands of various groups and individuals, can exert significant influence on our decisions and behaviours. This discourse addresses the impact of social and stakeholder pressure that the participants experienced when they were going through their marriage processes. Moreover, it speaks to the how these forces have shaped participants' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.

There is an African concept which can be considered philosophy: ubuntu, which is derived from a Nguni aphorism Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu (Khomba, 2011). Botho, which is Sotho

for the same philosophy, and the aphorism is extendable to Motho ke Motho ka Batho. This aphorism means a person is because of or through others, as stated in Khomba. This philosophy is not limited to Sotho or Nguni as it also occurs in other African languages, for example, in Tshivenda as Vhuntu (Khomba).

The implication of this philosophical aphorism is that African people value the principles of community or society. This speaks to the need to include the community, including necessary important stakeholders for any given event to witness major life events such as marriage. For instance, Agi explained that in our weddings, it is more of a communal engagement than individualistic where the bride and groom's needs are prioritised. Khomba (2011) cites Dia (1992), Mbigi (2005:75), and Van den Heuvel et al. (2006, p.48), who indicate that the ubuntu philosophy represents an African conception of human beings and their relationship with the community, embodying the ethics defining Africans and their social behaviours. This, as in Kgomotso's reflection, would explain the consideration of the presence of the king, for instance. Khomba also cites Tutu in Battle (1997, pp. 39-43), who expands the notion of ubuntu by outlining that Africans are social beings in constant communion with one another. A human being is regarded as a human being through their relationships with other human beings. Therefore, the survival of a human being is dependent not only on one's nuclear family, but also on other people, such as members of the community. This contrasts with individualism, which is a feature of Western culture. These authors assert that individualism comprises insensitive competitiveness and unilateral decision-making, which is antithetical to the principle of ubuntu.

Agi's assertion about how black people's weddings are a communal engagement is supported by Nkateko who said that it is a family thing for black people. This indicates that there would be expectations from the family and community at large in terms of what they consider appropriate as requirements for getting married. The need for community to be included can also be attributed to the fact that people have dissimilar roles to play in the marriage ceremony. This need for community is supported by Biko (1987), who states that the oneness of community is at the heart of black people's culture. Neo expands on the statement made by Agi with a specific explanation of the different roles that family members play in the marriage process. He explains that bo Malome [Uncles], and bo Rakgadi [Aunts] from both betrothed play spiritual roles. Neo

gives an example saying that a cow is slaughtered and disseminated in a certain way, and the head of the beast is specifically given to the uncles since there are spiritual reasons for that.

The principle of ubuntu, however, is contentious in modern society. This is supported by Khomba (2011), who outlines that there are challenges in the upholding of principles and beliefs governing traditional African society. This is also mentioned by the participants who reported feeling pressured by the stakeholders as far as marriage conduct is concerned. Agi, for instance, said that she did the white wedding because of pressure from her parents and other people because they wanted her to do it, even though she was not necessarily interested in having a white wedding. Siyabonga shared similar sentiments when she mentions that her parents also expected the separate full-day white wedding. Given that ubuntu denotes the inclusion of family and community, Nkateko notes how it is difficult to find a balance between what you really want to do and the need to respect your elders, who impose pressure with their ideas and decisions, which may not resonate with you. This shows that decision-making brews internal conflicts as people would have to reconcile their decisions in line with pressures experienced. This contention can be attributed to the presence of modernity, which stems from colonisation. This is evident in the statement by Khomba (2011), who mentions that the challenges in upholding *ubuntu* can be attributed to the fact that Africans are part of a multicultural and urban society. The use of Ubuntu as a philosophy enables us to understand how black people reason in a colonised society. This with particular reference to how such philosophies serve them in a positive way, but noting the drawbacks the philosophy presents given the twoness of existence in modern society. Moreover, these dual experiences will not always be perceived as negative.

The social pressure mentioned also occurs indirectly in modern times through social media. Nokuthula speaks about how trends on social media influence people's choices. This is particularly with regard to white weddings, but modernisation is visible in traditional weddings which are advertised as well. The need to conform to such pressures is noted in the statements made by the participants. It is captured in the statement by Nokuthula on the fact that people would question the validity of her marriage because she did not have certain white wedding elements in her ceremony.

Dialectics of Wedding Aesthetics

This discourse speaks about the dialectics of aesthetics surrounding marriage celebrations. Through a dialectical lens, I examine how the participants value aesthetics and how they rationalised the inclusion of modern aspects in their celebrations. This discourse investigates how the dialectics of aesthetics inform our understanding of identity, beauty, and the necessity thereof. By probing the dialectics of aesthetics, I address the ways in which opposing forces interact, adapt, and transform, ultimately revealing the nuanced nature of marriage celebration aesthetics.

Before the entry of a white wedding, there was relevant attire for traditional weddings that African people wore. These are the traditional clothes and accessories such as ihiya, isidwaba, and isiphandla which Siyabonga wore. These have spiritual significance as well, as Kgomotso indicated that she had to wear inyongo (bile of an animal) to be introduced to the ancestors and to show that she is now a part of the new family she has been married into. Enter the white wedding, where a white dress must be worn by the bride and a suit by the groom. The white wedding gown also has ceremonial significance such as the traditional clothes and accessories worn by black South Africans. The wedding dress is typically white in most cases. Nkateko says the colour white signifies that the wife is pure and complete. This is supported by Erlank (2014), who outlines how a white dress has the potential to indicate sexual purity. This white wedding dress has also been the quintessential standard in terms of bridal beauty with most brides wearing the dress in the white wedding ceremony. Mupotsa (2014), who mentions that the figure of the bride is iconographic, agrees.

Given the incorporation of the white wedding into the traditional ceremonies, we also see a trend in South Africa where the standard style of the white gown is altered in order to merge with traditional accoutrements. A dialectical process is evident here, where we see traditional attire, considered as the thesis, the white wedding gown as an antithesis, and the synthesis being the hybridity of a white wedding gown with traditional elements. Siyabonga speaks to this observation as she mentions how people are now moving away from the traditional white wedding dress, which is antithetical to traditional attire, by merging it with isishweshwe (traditionally patterned) material which can be considered as the thesis. The synthesis of white wedding dress and traditional accoutrements is attributed to globalisation by Siyabonga, who

contends that it emerges as a horrible conflict. Du Bois (2008) contends that the turning hither and thither of the black man in America since emancipation has caused a loss of power, resulting in weakness. However, Du Bois (2008) asserts that this is not weakness but a contradiction of double aims. These double aims are synonymous with the synthesis presented by Siyabonga, who refers to them as a horrible conflict. The globalisation mentioned presents a facet of coloniality, which is power and dominance. According to her, this is because it seems that one wants to do the traditional but still want to feel like they are doing the white wedding. The combination of the white wedding dress with traditional African elements of dress presents a moment of double consciousness, which is addressed by Fanon (1967), who outlines how, in the colonial psyche, there is an unconscious disavowal of the negating, splitting moment of desire. This assertion is applicable here where black people have a moment of desire to show their tradition by having traditional wedding accoutrements on a white dress. Fanon (1967) further asserts that the Other, which represents an alien consciousness, negates a primordial identity – cultural or psychic. Here, the Other can be seen as the Eurocentric way of dress, whereas the primordial identity can be viewed as the African way of dress.

The white dress is such a significant artefact in the wedding process. In addition to it showing that one is pure, as mentioned, it has also been a prototypical standard of bridal beauty. Nkateko, who supports this view, mentions that people's mindsets have been changed to see beauty in the white wedding dress rather than the beauty in our cultural practices. Nkateko links this directly with colonisation, saying that it is a consequence which has projected the white practices as something beautiful. Nkateko essentially outlines that when we think of beauty, we look at it from Western standards, not African standards. This is supported by Rodney (1973), who stated that colonialism went much further than trade because it meant a tendency towards direct appropriation by Europeans of the social institutions within Africa. This appropriation can be applied to how we think of beauty as well, which has been either consciously or subconsciously accepted by Africans. This acceptance is seen in how black people get dressed at weddings where the act of wearing a white dress has become so widespread. Fanon (1952) also relates the significance of the colour white as a symbol of purity, justice, truth, and virginity which, he asserts, are dimensions that define what it means to be civilised, modern and human, and blackness is the opposite to as it stands for ugliness, sin, darkness and immorality. This appropriation affects the ability of black people to assert themselves in terms of their culture and

to set indigenous cultural goals and standards, as mentioned by Rodney (1973), who says these are major steps backward.

Kgomotso mentioned that she wore a nude dress, and Agi wore a purple dress. This shows how black people are consciously moving away from the prototypical standard of beauty and purity. Agi chuckles at how, in her journey, wearing a purple dress does not meet expected societal standards. This indicates that black people could be defying Eurocentric standards of appropriate wear for weddings, showing how black people are conscious of the impact of colonisation and of their attempts to move away from colonial standards.

Neo speaks more on beauty and how colonisation has impacted the black mind or consciousness as they have been taught or conscientized to see beauty through the blue eyes of the European, not through our own African eyes. This, according to Neo, is a behaviour that is visible in how people think of what beautiful hair looks like, whereas African people had seen their hair as beautiful before it had to match up to the standards that white people have placed on us.

On the other hand, Kgomotso challenges the general view that white weddings are more glamorous, particularly on Instagram. This is because she sees trends and shifts in South Africa where people seemingly are interested in traditional weddings. She also reflects on receiving more engagement on the traditional side of her wedding to the point where there were there was an article on Isolezwe, (an isiZulu newspaper). This, according to Kgomotso, indicates a shift in how people view beauty, where black people take an interest in going back to the traditional way of doing things and want to move away from the white wedding. The barrier to this is that colonisation has affected how people think. Kgomotso extends her optimistic view to how people view hair beauty because of the influence of a former Miss South Africa who wore their natural hair and had a darker skin tone. She says this has influenced people to wear their hair more naturally. Nokuthula, however, challenges Kgomotso's views, saying that the fact that her traditional wedding made the news can be interpreted because of it not happening as often as it should be. This means that Isolezwe is trying to influence people, so that they can get married that way and to show that it can be glamourous and beautiful. Essentially, Nokuthula contends that the need to write about it speaks to the fact that it does not happen as it should. The tension between Kgomotso and Nokuthula's statements is well captured by Neo who says that, although

there is a rise is consciousness among black people regarding the relevance of white weddings for black people, he does not see their cultures evolving; rather, he sees that it is being suppressed regardless of this rise in consciousness.

Discourse Three: Legal Discourses

The legal framework governing marriage in South Africa has been shaped by colonial and apartheid regimes, which imposed Western notions of marriage and family on black people. This legacy has had far-reaching implications for Black South Africans' experiences of marriage, inheritance, and family structures. There has been a growing recognition of the need to decolonize the legal framework governing marriage and family law in South Africa. This includes acknowledging and respecting indigenous customs and traditions, as well as addressing the historical injustices perpetuated by colonial and apartheid laws. This is as addressed by The Recognition of Customary Marriage Act 120 of 1998. This discourse explores the legal conversations surrounding the participants' experiences when they were getting married, I address the debates around cultural recognition, legal pluralism, and the quest for justice and equality in the context of marriage and family law.

Some participants recall being unsure in terms of explaining when they can be considered as married, particularly in terms of the law, throughout the various processes they have carried out. The questions of legality stem from the fact that black people conduct traditional weddings and white weddings. Both marriage types present a juxtaposition in terms of legality. This problem was raised by Nokuthula, who tried to gain an understanding as to when a black person is considered married. The concern Nokuthula raises speaks to the question of the legal recognition of one's marriage. This is a common problem, particularly in South Africa, as many people do not know that the various rituals and ceremonies in African traditional settings represent a customary marriage which is, in effect, a valid marriage. This is supported by Tiwane (2023) who outlines that couples tend to overlook legal intricacies when getting married, this being a result of limited access to information, and generally misunderstanding of laws. Many people end up going to sign at the Department of Home Affairs, which manages the official identity and

status of people in South Africa as one of its mandates, as explained by the Department of Home Affairs (2019). This is in an effort to validate their marriage. It is unfortunate that even those who do not sign such documentation in attempts to validate their marriage through this Western institution also have their marriages subjected to the Western perspective of law. Lastly, Neo notes that when disputes arise in a marriage that was based on African cultural negotiations and agreements, the resolutions will be decided on white values. This occurs even when processes in African traditional customs are process driven and quite technical, as pointed out by Siyabonga. This concern is crucial. We see dual expectations in terms of the validation of black people's marriages, where customary law is subject to civil laws, as Neo has pointed out. Based on Neo's statement, it is clear that the Western validation of a marriage is generally viewed as the model type of marriage validation. Neo's assertion is supported by the fact that there are instances when people, who are only married through indigenous customs are considered to be married in community of property (COP). COP is a marriage regime in which the separate estates of spouses are merged into a single joint estate for the duration of the marriage, as stated by De Jong and Pintens (2015), this is even if the couple did not explicitly consent to this option of marriage. With specific reference to property, Higgins et al. (2003) support this observation by stating that the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act also alters customary marriage where the default presumption regarding property will be in COP. This can also be considered true for other elements of the marriage such as dispute resolution, as Neo mentioned, which would be decided by civil law. This is supported by Higgins et al. (2003), who state that, although traditional leaders are still empowered to attempt to resolve disputes prior to the dissolution of the marriage, divorce proceedings are to be regulated by state courts, for example. COP as a marriage regime comes with some challenges such as sharing all assets including debt, as given in De Jong and Pintens (2015). This should be even more gruesome for those who did not consent explicitly to COP as they will potentially have to face such consequences in the event that they get divorced. One limitation of customary law is that it simply does not protect or view our marriages in a proper light because they still measure it according to white standards, as asserted by Neo.

The dual expectations of black people in terms of the law also speaks to double aims, as mentioned by Du Bois (2008). These double aims bring about insufficient understanding of what a legal marriage entail. This is a problem in society where it is clear that black people are confused

about what constitutes a legal marriage. These inadequacies also result in failure by civil law of acknowledging and understanding African customs. African traditional customs should ideally inform the development of the law in terms of registering, managing, and resolving marital disputes in order to counter the inadequacies that currently stand in civil law.

Discourse Four: Religious Imperialism

This discourse speaks to the imposition of Western religion on African belief systems and how this has reshaped the spiritual practices and identities of black people when getting married. Coloniality has impacted the religious landscape, through constantly erasing indigenous traditions and at the same time, appropriating its own culture. This discourse reveals the tensions between resistance and assimilation as per participant's experiences.

One of the ways which made colonisation successful was through introducing religion, particularly Christianity, to African people in an effort to suppress African spirituality and religion. Neo spoke to this assertion, saying that Christianity came with the people who colonised us, which brought existing traditional norms into question. They are not recognised because they are not Christian. Fanon (1986) speaks to phenomena concerning a black man's metaphysics of customs: two frames of reference have been given to him to place himself, and the sources on which they were based were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilisation (Western) that he did not know and that imposed itself on him.

This is supported by Erlank (2014), who outlines how, when black South Africans converted to Christianity, they adopted many of the rites associated with the religion, including the Christian wedding. This indicates that Christianity has been a catalyst in the adaptation of African marriage culture, where white weddings have been incorporated into African traditional marriage ceremonies. This relates to the assertion made by Nokuthula, who said that we are in a Christian country and that this religion is a driving force in terms of social pressure when people are influenced in the way in which they get married.

In Neo's view of how African traditional customs and religion are stigmatised, he explains that because white weddings are viewed as superior to traditional weddings, the spiritual aspects of the latter tend to be overlooked. The assertion by Neo about the inferiority of spiritual aspects

of traditional weddings is supported by Biko (1987) in his analysis of Christianity, where he outlines that this religion has gone through rigorous cultural adaptation in different parts of the world over time. However, in the case of South Africa, it was centralised as a culture which influenced clothing, customs, forms of etiquette, and medical approaches, for example. This caused the indigenous people where Christianity was imparted, to do away with their indigenous religions because they were described as pagan and barbarian. In essence, this oppressed existing religious ways of being. Biko (1987) asserts that reference was not made to African culture, where, in addition to its being seen as barbaric and paganistic, religious practices and customs were regarded as superstitious.

One also has to consider how Christianity actively came with missionaries to Africa, where there should be no doubt that these missionaries were agents of colonialism in the practical sense, whether or not they saw themselves in that light, as stated by Rodney (1973). Christianity was forced, pointed out as good and beneficial, but black people really did not have a choice. The results of the oppression of African religion by the Christian church bear resonance with Agi's experience in recounting that her Christian pastor was adamant about having Agi and her husband tie the knot in church. She points out that the demonising of African culture by her church was because of a lack of understanding African culture. Agi and her husband boldly refused and opted to go the traditional route, including lobola, which is specifically interpreted by the church as a financial exploitation.

One way in which we see how Africans have managed to safeguard their cultural values is supported by Rodney (1973), who mentions how Africans accepted religious aspects of the work done by missionaries while rejecting the cultural appendages and the European missionaries themselves. Biko's (1987) contribution to the defiance of Christianity contains his assertation that the acceptance of the colonialist-tainted version of Christianity marked the turning point in the resistance of African people (p.60). Rodney (1975) expands on Biko's notions on the role of the church, stating that it was intended to preserve capitalism in Europe through stressing humility, docility and acceptance. The same features apply in African society, where the intention in this case is to inhibit any hopes of equality of cultures. This was a prevalent issue for Agi, who was challenged by her Christian pastor who tried to deter her and her husband from practising African traditional customs. Agi also mentioned how African culture has been

demonised by Christian churches because of a lack of understanding it. The role of our education and religion can be considered to be the main contributing factor to the false understanding of ourselves, according to Agi. This has led to acculturation, particularly in terms of religion, as asserted by Biko. Moreover, Biko (1987) states that other people, in this case pastors, have become authorities on all aspects of the African life as they find themselves demonising African spirituality. Rodney (1973) further outlines how African ancestral beliefs were equated with the devil (who was black anyway), witchcraft and magic.

Many black people have stopped practising their African cultural religious customs because of the role of Christianity in suppressing it, making black people feel guilty for practising it, and demonising it, as Agi and Neo clearly pointed out. The concept of the demonising of African culture is confirmed by Biko (1987), who outlines how Christianity was promoted since black people are seen in a negative light, which Christian churches viewed as vices – and, in turn, anything valuable is associated with whiteness and Christianity.

Neo has analysed and given examples of African religious customs that are adhered to in his culture. There are deviations from Christianity, which Agi alluded to in her experience. Neo has also spoken to the necessity of these customs, which Christianity does not allow, such as the slaughtering of a cow, for example. The fact that spiritual aspects of the traditional ceremonies tend to be overlooked, in Neo's opinion, contributes to its acculturation. The hiding of these practices also contributes to acculturation, as asserted by Siyabonga. Given the incorporation of Western and African ceremonies, religious practices are merged too, and Neo is of the view that this causes a clash. Biko (1987) supports this assertion, mentioning that the fusing of African culture with a culture (Anglo Boer), which had the trappings of colonialism and was equipped for conquest, in turn, led to black people hating their own religion and misunderstanding its real role or intention. Nkateko also points out that the white wedding is not fully carried out; it is half traditional and half Western. She further outlines that not doing the full (complete) thing indicates that black people do not know where they belong; they are in the middle, which shows some level of confusion. There is an implied struggle to strike a balance between African spirituality and Christianity, as stated by Nkateko. There is also a struggle to understand what is correct to practise, what is necessary and what holds significance. This is analysed by Neo who first asserts that there is a spiritual clash of cultures. This is because white weddings are viewed

as superior to the traditional wedding, which tends to be overlooked. Neo refers to the necessity of slaughtering a cow or beast (which has been practice for black people since before colonisation) being that it is an act that connects the ancestors of the respective families, whereas the antithetical Christian religion refutes this act as the shedding of an animal's blood, which would not be recognised. Neo further shows how this diminishing of African spirituality results in certain spiritual aspects being overlooked or not considered at all.

With specific reference to the negative Christian influence on African culture, Agi also mentions how that affects the way black people think of themselves. Because this is a negative side-lining, black people find shame in following African traditional customs. In his assessment of the spiritual strife of American Negroes, Du Bois (2008) mentions how seeking to satisfy two unreconciled ideals, in this case, African spirituality and Christianity, sends black people to wooing false gods and invoking false means of salvation, and displays self-shame. This speaks to why some black people who practise African customs go as far as doing it secretly because of the shame attached to practising something that society perceives as evil. This is confirmed by Siyabonga, who spoke about the consequences of inadequate knowledge about certain customs that were performed. In her reflection, she says she had to wear isiphandla that had not been prepared properly.

One of the results of not conforming to Christian standards is being isolated/excluded from society, which Agi also alluded to when she mentioned the shift in engagement from her church when they decided to get married in the African traditional way. This results in black people struggling to practise their culture effectively, which can cause confusion. This is explained by Nkateko who believes that colonisation played a role in making black people forget who they are as it makes them neglect their cultural principles. She attributed to this problem to religion which prescribes that one must wear a white dress to indicates the purity of the bride.

Dialectical reasoning provides an understanding of the incorporation of these two types of religion. Imperialism comes through as the course of discrediting African spirituality; also, in terms of its validity. Neo essentially stipulated the necessity of practising African religious customs when getting married and he justifies the rejection of Christianity to some degree. Lastly, he provides an explanation for why both religions are only practised in part to have a

seemingly single form of religious practice. This speaks again to a double consciousness experience of black people.

Discourse Five: Economic Discourses

The legacy of colonialism has perpetuated economic dominance, exploitation, and dependency. This discourse discusses the impact of colonialism on the economic systems and structures of black people, particularly when getting married. I discuss how the imposition of foreign economic systems has disrupted indigenous economic practices and self-determination. This discourse therefore unpacks how colonization does not address black people's economic freedom. Lastly, the participants' agency and resistance are highlighted in this discourse.

Against the backdrop of colonisation and apartheid having had an impact on various aspects of black people's lives, the financial aspect of their lives has also been affected. Before colonisation, black people had their methods of trading. The currency could be understood as bartering with material goods which were not in the form of cash or coins currently used as money. Agi outlines that in days past, currency was not money, but dikgomo (cattle), for example. Agi also indicates that when people got married, dikgomo was given to the other family, not as a matter of purchasing a person, but as an exchange to thank parents for raising their child (the prospective wife), and also as an indication of the ability of the new family to take care of that child. Such forms of currency have been replaced by money, the rand in South Africa. Given this, a dialectical process in terms of currency is evident in South Africa where we see how bartering with goods as the thesis, and money the antithesis. The current situation, which can be considered the synthesis, is that the practice of ilobolo is maintained but paid via money and not in the form of cattle anymore. This has undermined the act of lobola as the exchange of money for a prospective wife can connote negatively that she has been bought. This is a contentious issue in South Africa because it has affected how people think of lobola in that people are opposed to the implied selling of women at a price. This is because a monetary amount is set according to the value of a single cow. The value of these cows appreciates over time and is multiplied by the number of cows deemed appropriate by the bride's family. The exchange of money presents unintended implications mainly that the bride is being sold. This is

because black people are now in a society where, as mentioned, money, not cows is used as a currency.

All of this is happening at a time when assimilation into Western culture is still a process in motion, resulting in incongruence at a societal level where individuals struggle to reconcile the act of bringing two families together because of the implied selling of a woman. In that a white wedding is amalgamated into a traditional wedding, the necessity and significance of ilobolo came to be questioned. This is where we see tension about the act; some see its relevance as reinforcing traditional and cultural values, for example, or having the act of lobola being undermined. Nokuthula shares the former perception of the relevance of lobola by refuting the implied selling of women as she shares the maxim that umuntu akathengwa, which means that a person cannot be bought in African society. This is supported by Makama (2020) who states that the Bantu people unanimously declared that the idea of marriage by purchasing a bride is not practised by them. Nokuthula further explains how lobola continues to lose its meaning when people are conducting things according to incorrect standards. Whereas lobola was meant to honour the woman with whom the husband is going to build a home, now we see that this act is contaminated. She gives an example: if a woman is educated, more cows would be demanded, which essentially means that the value of cows is set based on such standards, which contaminates the intended formation of new family relations. Neo supports the fact that the exchange of money does not mean that women are being bought, and states that such misinterpretations are incorrect and are the result of misunderstanding African culture which demonises it; hence, arguments prevail that paying lobola means a wife has been bought.

The society we live in also presents a barrier in terms of affordability. Lobola was the weighty requirement in terms of cost to black people getting married. Given that black people still adhere to this practice, the addition of the white wedding adds to the cost because it is also an expensive event. This is also vocalised by Neo who says that black people are predominantly affected financially when getting married. Nkateko agrees, saying that having the two types of weddings is costly because there is much money involved. Erlank (2014) expands on the cost implications for black people given their unique context, outlining how contemporary ethnographies show that black weddings could be costly. Erlank (2014) clearly delineates this observation and alludes to colonisation as a catalyst:

By the 1940s the black middle class was experiencing a temporary respite, as a result of war conditions, from the downward economic pull of the previous few decades…Bonner (1982), Cobley (1990), and Goodhew (2000) have noted that during the 1920s and 1930s there was a deterioration in the living standards of educated, black South Africans, especially "respectable" Christians. While most work has concentrated on urban areas, the case was no less so for rural South Africa and a Christian peasant class. In the reserves, a combination of government taxes and white farming monopolies made it difficult for black entrepreneurs to build capital or to maintain middle-class lifestyles. Black South Africans, who modelled their lifestyles on those of West, were finding it very difficult to make ends meet, and formerly debt-free families had become saddled with debt by the late 1930s. African purchasing power declined substantially over the second two decades of the twentieth century, so that weddings were not only expensive in absolute terms, but also becoming more expensive relative to other costs (p. 40).

Discourse Six: Condemnation of African Cultures

This discourse delves into the denunciation of African culture. This is done by unpacking the complexities and challenges that have been brought about by dominant narratives of Eurocentrism. The "condemnation" referred to in the title is not meant to perpetuate harmful stereotypes, but rather to acknowledge the parts of African culture that have been marginalized, suppressed, or distorted through coloniality. Herein, traumas inflicted through colonialism are outlined. Moreover, the ways in which coloniality is used as a tool of control but also a source of resistance by black people is outlined in this discourse. Lastly, this discourse highlights the importance of centering African voices and perspectives in the narrative of their own story.

Participants have also touched on what lies ahead for black people in terms of how future generations will get married. Before looking into what lies ahead in terms of marriage conduct, participants took into consideration some causes for the incorporation of Western practices into black people's weddings. One of the causes is how poorly our customs, particularly the issue of

lobola, have been documented, as stated by Neo, who also mentions how rather than black people documenting their customs and cultures, Europeans have discussed them and made their own interpretations which have, in turn, demonised our cultures. This thought is extended by Siyabonga, who indicates that the poor documentation results in black people engaging in acts that they do not have a full understanding and the significance thereof.

The practice of African traditional customs is quite important as participants have mentioned. This is especially so with the rituals performed in getting married. Neo mentioned this, saying that, although one may want to deviate from African cultural norms and standards (by pulling towards Western norms) when getting married, there will be consequences. One of the significant reasons is that getting married is to bring together two families. Nkateko reinforces Neo's assertions regarding the importance of sticking to one's own norms when she says that a white wedding is someone else's tradition.

Elders in society have been referenced as the bearers of valid knowledge pertaining to marriage customs. Nokuthula suggests that, even in the face of coloniality, culture is not without its faults because she was not privy to all the rituals that happened on her wedding day. The role of the elders and how they have hidden information is mentioned in the reflections of Siyabonga and Nokuthula, who both received stern guidance and instructions through their wedding processes. However, they also note that some rituals are kept confidential, causing a miseducation because the practices are seemingly hidden. The hiding of knowledge causing misinterpretation by Europeans has opened the true knowledge of African customs to vulnerability, as mentioned by Neo, who said that Europeans have discussed their (African) customs and, in turn, demonised them. Nkateko talks about how black people have lost their roots. This can be attributed to the miseducation and misinterpretation of African culture and customs. According to her, this has steered people into thinking that they have to have a white wedding in order to be qualified as being married.

Kgomotso proposes a possible solution to this problem, saying that a handful of elders are bearers of knowledge pertaining to customs in black society, who are willing and able to teach us what it means to have a traditional wedding and why things happen the way they do. Neo also speaks about how there is a rise in consciousness among black people who see that white weddings are not actually relevant to black people. This should also present a remedy to the

research problem where black people are conscientized. Lastly, Nkateko states how we as black people have lost our roots, which is detrimental and causes a lot of pressure on black people, particularly financial pressure. The losing of roots speaks to cultural decay inferred from the suggestion that African culture has been suppressed. Neo supports this statement and suggests that black people need a complete mental overhaul to value our own customs and traditions. It is at a subconscious and psychological level that black people still measure what they do against white standards. Rodney (1973), explains that the facts and interpretation following an extensive investigation of neo-colonialism in attempts to formulate the strategy and tactics of African emancipation and development, should at least provide solutions implicit in a correct historical evaluation. Rodney (1973) also posits that these historical evaluations should reinforce the conclusion that African development is only possible based on a radical break with the international capitalist system, which has been the principal agency of the underdevelopment of Africa. Nkateko suggests that black people must choose what practices they will follow, emphasising the importance of understanding who we are by going back to our roots and making choices based on that understanding. According to Kgomotso, Nkateko, and Neo, the onus is on black people and future generations to practice their own culture, and if this does not happen, the cycle will not end.

Finally, the resilience of black people is captured by Neo who mentions that although black people have been colonised, to their credit, they have been trying creatively to navigate themselves around this imposition of different cultures. He also mentions how we did not have a choice in this imposition. This speaks to black people's agency, in that they ought to be able to act in accordance with what they know to be best for them.

Conclusion

The discussion and analysis of results has provided an understanding of the various discourses using a dialectical lens. These discourses are about opposition, societal pressure, legal discourses, religious imperialism, economic discourses, and condemnation of African cultures. Coloniality is inherent in all these discourses, which are interrelated and have been linked to the impact of colonisation in the psyche of black people. This is presented through accounts given by married people who have reflected on challenges in getting married, particularly on the incorporation of the white wedding into the traditional one. The evident incongruence in some

cases can be considered as the main obstacle to addressing the issue of incorporating the white wedding, even as participants see clearly that it is an act invasive to what they know. Agi has explained that even when faced with all the facts presented, black people still cling to the white wedding. She also mentioned that if she were to choose, if she were to get married again, she would still want to do the white wedding even when presented with the fact that colonisation is pervasive in marriage conduct. Neo mentioned that a complete mental overhaul would be a solution for black people to value their own customs and traditions because psychologically, subconsciously we still measure what we do against white standards.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Strengths of the Study

This research has shown uniqueness in terms of the methodological approach to the topic. This is evident in how Africana existentialism as a theoretical framework with Afrocentrism as a paradigm; having a dialectical–relational approach to critical discourse as a method of analysis is woven together. Another strength of this study lies in how the chosen data collection method was successful in the intent to spark conversation among the participants. Moreover, this study cuts-across areas of academic enterprise besides psychology in terms of the knowledge it provides, these areas being sociology, Africana studies, and socio-politics. The importance of a study going beyond various fields of studies is endorsed by Kellner (1995), as cited by Rabaka (2016), in suggesting that radical politics today should be more multicultural, race, and gender focused, and broad based than the original Marxian [and Western European critical] theory, which has been accomplished by this research.

This paper has illustrated how colonisation has had a psychological impact on black people, particularly with regard to marriage rites. The dialectical–relational approach to critical discourse analysis has also enabled a lens to view what marriage practices were before black people were colonised, what the impact of was colonisation on these practices, and how they are trying to emancipate themselves psychologically from colonial bondage.

Although colonisation has been proven to be psychologically damaging, the participants have indicated a will for black people to reevaluate the status quo; moreover, an observation has been made where participants have displayed a will to emancipate themselves psychologically from incorporating Western practices into African traditional weddings. This research therefore presents opportunities to resolve identified dissonance in the psyche of black people.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this research project should be interpreted with consideration of some limitations. Different possible solutions could be provided to the research problem. However, it is difficult to propose rectification to such complex social problems because of how deeply

rooted the impact of colonisation is in the psyche of black people. Another limitation is that there were six respondents who participated online, some were more vocal and engaged whereas some were less vocal. Moreover, the phenomenon of group think was noted whereby consensus was easily reached on questions at hand, without a lot of tension during the session. These are common drawbacks of a focus group. Given that the study in qualitative in nature and that only six individuals participated, the findings cannot be generalised to the whole population. Lastly, only one individual was male; therefore, more males would be required in order to have a sample that is more inclusive in terms of gender.

Study Recommendations

In terms of the approach to research, different lenses could be used in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This could be achieved through other studies focused on the same topic. Moreover, it would be beneficial to have a more practical response of the avenues available for black people with regard to how to identify and grapple with issues of identity post colonisation.

REFERENCES

Ahluwalia, P., & Nursey-Bray, P. (Eds.). (1997). *Post colonialism: Culture and identity in Africa.* Nova Sciences Publishers.

Barnes, M. W. (2014). *Our Family Functions: Functions of Traditional Weddings for Modern Brides and Postmodern Families. Qualitative Sociology Review, 26*(1),60-78.

Bhabha, H. (1986). The other question: Difference, discrimination, and the discourse of colonialism. In F. Baker; P. Hulme; M. Iversen & D. Loxley (Eds.), *Literature, politics, and theory*, (pp. 148–172). Routledge.

Biko, S. (1987). *I write what I like: Steve Biko. A selection of his writings*. (A. Stubbs, Ed.). Heinemann.

Césaire, A. (1972). *Discourse on colonialism: A poetics of anticolonialism*. (J. Pinkham, Trans.). Monthly Review Press.

Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Sage.

Collier, A. (2008). *Marx: A beginner's guide*. Oneworld.

Comaroff, J., Roberts, S., & Roberts, S. (1981). *Rules and processes: The cultural logic of dispute settlement in an African context*. University of Chicago Press.

De Jong, M., & Pintens, W. (2015). Default matrimonial property regimes and the principles of European family law–a European–South African comparison (part 2). *Journal of South African Law/Tydskrif vir die Suid-Afrikaanse Reg, 2015*(3), 551–566.

Denbow, J., & Thebe, P. C. (2006). *Culture and customs of Botswana*. Greenwood Publishing.

Department of Home Affairs (2019). White Paper on Home Affairs. http://www.dha.gov.za/images/PDFs/UPDATEDdhawhitepaper2019.pdf

Du Bois, W. E. B. (2008). *The souls of black folk* (B. H. Edwards, Ed.). Oxford University Press.

Easthope, A. (1998). Bhabha, hybridity and identity. *Textual Practice, 12*(2), 341–348. DOI: 10.1080/09502369808582312

Ellece, S. E. (2012). The placenta of the nation: Motherhood discourses in Tswana marriage ceremonies. *Gender & Language, 6*(1), 79–103. DOI: 10.1558/genl.v6i1.79

Ember, C.R., Gonzalez, B., & McCloskey, D. (2021). Marriage and family. In C. R. Ember (Ed.), *Explaining human culture. Human relations area files.* https://hraf.yale.edu/ehc/summaries/marriage-and-family [Accessed 8 October 2023].

Erlank, N. (2014). The white wedding: affect and economy in South Africa in the early twentieth century. *African Studies Review*, *57*(2), 29–50. DOI:10.1017/asr.2014.46

Etikan, I., Musa, S.A., & Alkassim, R.S. (2016). Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), 1-4. DOI: 10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Fanon, F. (1952/2008). *Black skin, white masks* (C. L. Markmann, Trans.). Pluto Press. https://monoskop.org/images/a/a5/Fanon_Frantz_Black_Skin_White_Masks_1986.pdf

Gordon, L. R. (2002). *Existentia Africana: Understanding Africana existential thought*. Taylor & Francis.

Herbst, M., & du Plessis, W. (2008). Customary law v common law marriages: A hybrid approach in South Africa. *Electronic Journal of Comparative Law, 12*(1), 1–15.

Higgins, T. E., Fenrich, J., & Tanzer, Z. (2006). Gender equality and customary marriage: Bargaining in the shadow of post-apartheid legal pluralism. *Fordham International Law Journal, 30*, 1653.

Imami, T. R., Mu'in, F. & Nasrullah, N. (2021). Linguistic and cultural problems in translation. *Atlantis Press, 587*, 178-186. DOI:10.2991/assehr.k.211021.024.

Itzigsohn, J., & Brown, K. L. (2020). Double Consciousness: The Phenomenology of Racialized Subjectivity. In J. Itzigsohn & K. L. Brown (Eds.), *The Sociology of W. E. B. Du Bois: Racialized Modernity and the Global Color Line* (pp. 27-61). New York University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv11vcch9.5

Khomba, J. K. (2011). *Redesigning the balanced scorecard model: An African perspective.* [Doctoral thesis, University of Pretoria].

Koyana, D. S. (1980). *Customary law in a changing society*. Juta.

Makama, R.E. (2020). *Constructions, Negotiations and Performances of Gender and Power in Lobolo: An African-Centred Feminist Perspective.* [Doctoral thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria].

Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007). On the coloniality of being. *Cultural Studies, 21*(2), 240–270. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548

Marx, K. H. (1852/1907). The *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (D. de Leon, Trans.). Charles H. Kerr & Company.

Mazama, A. (2001). The Afrocentric paradigm: Contours and definitions. *Journal of Black Studies*, *31*(4), 387–405. https://doi.org/10.1177/002193470103100401

Mkabela, Q. (2005). Using the Afrocentric method in researching indigenous African culture. *The Qualitative Report, 10*(1), 178–189. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/ vol. 10/iss1/10.

Mokwana, M. L. (2009). *The melting pot in Ga-Matlala Maserumule with special reference to the Bapedi culture, language and dialects*. [Doctoral thesis, University of South Africa].

Monger, G. P. (2004). *Marriage customs of the world: From henna to honeymoons.* ABC-CLIO.

Monyakane, T. M. M. (2016). *The cultural, social, and political similarity of the Bafokeng, Bakuena and the Bataug lineages amongst the Sotho*. [Doctoral thesis, University of South Africa].

Mulaudzi, P. A. (2013) Cultural perceptions and linguistic terminology regarding traditional marriage within indigenous South African communities. *South African Journal of African Languages*, *33*(2), 153–158, DOI: 10.1080/02572117.2013.871456

Mupotsa, D. S. (2014). *White weddings*. [Doctoral thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg].

Ndulo, M. (2011). African customary law, customs, and women's rights. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies, 18*(1), 87–120. http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/ijgls/vol18/iss1/5

Opong, A. K. (1997). *The religious significance of ritual practices conducted at births, weddings and funerals in Lesotho.* [Doctoral thesis, University of South Africa].

Panati, C. (2016). *Panati's extraordinary origins of everyday things*. Chartwell Books.

Pauli, J., & Van Dijk, R. (2016). Marriage as an end or the end of marriage? Change and continuity in Southern African marriages. *Anthropology Southern Africa*, *39*(4), 257-266.

Pilane. G. E. (2002). *An analysis of the construction of Tswana cultural identity in selected Tswana literary texts.* [Doctoral thesis, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education].

Posel, D., & Rudwick, S. (2014). Marriage and bridewealth (ilobolo) in contemporary Zulu society. *African Studies Review, 57*(2), 51–72. DOI:10.1017/asr.2014.47

Rabaka, R. (1977/2016). *Resistance and Decolonization* (D. Wood, Trans.). Rowman & Littlefield.

Rautenbach, C., & du Plessis, W. (2012). African customary marriages in South Africa and the intricacies of a mixed legal system: Judicial (In)novatio or Confusio? *McGill Law Journal, 57*(4), 749–780. https://doi.org/10.7202/1013030ar

Reviere, R. (2001). Toward an Afrocentric research methodology. *Journal of Black Studies*, *31*(6), 709–728. https://doi.org/10.1177/002193470103100601.

Rodney, W. (1973). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa.* Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications.

Seedorf. S., & Sibanda, S. (2014). Separation of powers. In S. Woolman & M. Bishop (Eds.), *Constitutional Law of South Africa,* 2nd ed. revision service 5. Vol. 1, Chapter 12, 1-98.

Semenya, D. K. (2014). The practical guidelines on the impact of mahadi [bride price] on the young Basotho couples prior to marriage. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies*, *70*(3), 1-6. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ hts.v70i3.1362

Recognition Of Customary Marriages (South Africa) Act 120 of 1998 (South Africa). 1–8. https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/acts/1998-120.pdf

Tiwane, B. (2023, September 18). Before the lobola negotiations this weekend, discuss an ante nuptial contract with your partner. *The Citizen*. https://www.citizen.co.za/lifestyle/before-the-lobola-negotiations-this-weekend-discuss-an-ante-nuptial-contract-with-your-partner/

Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. Discourse & Society, 4(2), 249-283.

Yarbrough, M. W. (2015). South African marriage in policy and practice: A dynamic story. *South African Review of Sociology*, (4694), 5–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2015.1100095.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

![UNISA university of south africa]

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

24 July 2020

Dear Masechaba Ngwenya

> NHREC Registration # :
> Rec-240816-052
>
> CREC Reference # : 2020-PsyREC-60041064

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 23 July 2020 to 30 September 2023

Researcher(s): Masechaba Ngwenya

Supervisor(s): Ms J Simango

> simanj@unisa.ac.za
>
> **Mrs BM Semenya**
>
> semenbm@unisa.ac.za

An analysis of the incorporation of western practice in black South African traditional weddings.

Qualification Applied: MA Psychology

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa Department of Psychology College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The *minimal risk application was reviewed and* expedited by Department of Psychology College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, on **23 July 2020** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

Open Rubric

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Department of Psychology Ethics Review Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (30 September 2023). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.
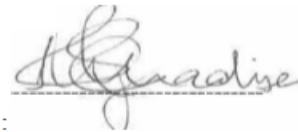
Note:

The reference number 2020-PsyREC-60041064 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature :

Prof I. Ferns
Ethics Chair: Psychology
Email: fernsi@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature :

Prof K. Masemola
Executive Dean : CHS
E-mail: masemk@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 2298

UNISA | university of south africa

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Supervisor:	Ms Julia Simango
Co-Supervisor:	Mrs Boshadi Semenya
Tel no:	(012) 429 8212
Email:	simanj@unisa.ac.za
Researcher:	Ms Masechaba Ngwenya
Cell number:	065 686 1901
Email:	60041064@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Masechaba Ngwenya, a student studying towards a master's degree in research consultation in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa. I am conducting a study which is titled **An analysis of the incorporation of Western practice in black South African traditional weddings**.

I am conducting this study in an attempt to gain an understanding of why black people incorporate white weddings into traditional weddings. Your participation will be valued as you will be assisting in me getting the required information since you have been married and have been through the relevant processes. As such, you are a good source of information. The information I will require you to share will be in a focus group session with other people who have been married. This session should not take more than four hours. Your role therefore is to reflect and share with me and other members of the group on your experiences and knowledge of the topic.

This research will benefit you in that you will have a meaningful conversation regarding black people's identity and culture. Furthermore, on the production of knowledge systems of black people, since the information you will share will be produced towards a scientific dissertation. This dissertation will be shared with you at the end of the project. The focus group session will be recorded and will be saved, if you agree to the recording, and I will also write these stories on paper word for word. The audio recordings and the transcripts of the audio recording will be kept

in a safe place. Identifying information will be kept confidential, which means they will not appear in official reports.

Your participation is voluntary. Please note that, at any given point of the study where you feel uncomfortable, you are welcome to withdraw your participation, and this will happen without you facing any negative consequences. Your participation will be anonymous if you wish to be, and then a pseudonym will be assigned to you in order to protect your personal identity. If you want to be identified, the opportunity to do so will be given.

You will be reimbursed for internet data costs. This is because you will be required to participate via a platform for virtual meetings. I will send you a link via email which should enable you to join the session where the focus group will take place. I will then admit you into the meeting after you have requested to join via the link.

Your personal contact details will not be shared with anyone besides the main researcher. These details will be used to establish and maintain contact with the researcher.

_____   01 October 2021_____

Masechaba Ngwenya   Date

Researcher

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Supervisor:	Ms Julia Simango
Co-Supervisor:	Mrs Boshadi Semenya
Tel no:	(012) 429 8212
Email:	simanj@unisa.ac.za
Researcher:	Ms Masechaba Ngwenya
Cell number:	065 686 1901
Email:	60041064@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Informed consent document

Title of study: An Analysis of the incorporation of Western practice in black South African traditional weddings

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that Ms Masechaba Ngwenya, a UNISA Master of Arts in Psychology Research Consultation candidate, who is asking my consent to take part in this research, has told me about the nature, procedure, and the implications of participation in the study.

- I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study, as explained in the information sheet.
- I have had enough opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.
- I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report and that my participation will be kept confidential and anonymous unless otherwise specified.
- I agree to the recording of the focus group session. I understand that this session includes other people and therefore everything I say will be known to them.
- I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.
- I am aware that the researcher may contact me in the future for other reasons pertaining to the research.

Participant Name and Surname_____ (please print)

Participant Signature_____ Date_____

Researcher's Name and Surname MASECHABA NGWENYA (please print)

Researcher's signature _____ Date___ 01 October 2021_____

APPENDIX D

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Guiding discussion questions

1.   How do you celebrate weddings in your culture?

2.   How are weddings understood in your culture?

3.   Please reflect on how you got married.

4.   How do you think colonisation has contributed to the history of black people's weddings?

5.   What influenced your choices and where do these influences stem from?

6.   How did the incorporation of the white wedding affect you in terms of planning the wedding?

7.   What is the difference between a white wedding and a traditional wedding in terms of conduct, dress, customs, and rituals?

8.   What is the significance of language use when talking about weddings?

9.   How is wedding culture changing and developing for black people?

Appendix E: Editing Certificate

Ricky Woods Academic Editing Services

Editing Certificate

Ricky Woods Academic Editing Services
Cell: +27 (0)83 3126310
Email: rickywoods604@gmail.com

To Whom It May Concern

University of South Africa

Editing of a Master's Dissertation

I, Marietjie Alfreda Woods, hereby certify that I have completed the editing and correction of the master's dissertation: **An analysis of the incorporation of Western practice in black South African traditional weddings** by **Masechaba Ngwenya**, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for Master of Arts degree.

I believe that the research proposal meets with the grammatical and linguistic requirements for a document of this nature.

Name of Editor: Marietjie Alfreda Woods

Qualifications: BA (Hons) (Wits); Copy-editing and Proofreading (UCT); Editing Principles and Practice (UP); Accredited Text Editor (English) (PEG)

MA (Ricky) Woods

11 November 2023

Professional EDITORS Guild
30 1993–2023
Promoting excellence in editing

Ricky Woods
Accredited Text Editor (English)
Membership number: WOO003
Membership year: March 2023 to February 2024
083 312 6310
rickywoods604@gmail.com
www.rickywoods604.wixsite.com/website
www.editors.org.za