

5-1-2017

IN PURSUIT OF A BLACK IDENTITY IN
CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA:
CULTURE, CLASS, AND GENDER IN
WEDDING REALITY TV SHOWS, TV
AUDIENCE COMMENTS, AND WEDDING
SPEECHES

Lindani Memani

Southern Illinois University Carbondale, lindani.memani@siu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/dissertations>

Recommended Citation

Memani, Lindani, "IN PURSUIT OF A BLACK IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA: CULTURE, CLASS, AND GENDER IN WEDDING REALITY TV SHOWS, TV AUDIENCE COMMENTS, AND WEDDING SPEECHES" (2017).

Dissertations. 1373.

<http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/dissertations/1373>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at OpenSIUC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of OpenSIUC. For more information, please contact opensiuc@lib.siu.edu.

IN PURSUIT OF A BLACK IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY
SOUTH AFRICA: CULTURE, CLASS, AND GENDER IN WEDDING REALITY TV
SHOWS, TV AUDIENCE COMMENTS, AND WEDDING SPEECHES

By

Lindani Mbunyuzza-Memani

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

College of Mass Communication and Media Arts

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

May 2017

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

IN PURSUIT OF A BLACK IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY
SOUTH AFRICA: CULTURE, CLASS, AND GENDER IN WEDDING REALITY TV
SHOWS, TV AUDIENCE COMMENTS, AND WEDDING SPEECHES

By

Lindani Mbunyuza-Memani

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of Mass Communication and Media Arts

Approved by:

Dr Lisa Brooten, Chair

Dr Uche Onyebadi

Dr Angela Aguayo

Dr Michele Leigh

Dr Margaretha Geertsema-Sligh

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
April 7, 2017

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Lindani Mbunyuza-Memani, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Mass Communication and Media Arts, presented on April 7, 2017, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: IN PURSUIT OF A BLACK IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY
SOUTH AFRICA: CULTURE, CLASS, AND GENDER IN WEDDING REALITY TV
SHOWS, TV AUDIENCE COMMENTS, AND WEDDING SPEECHES

MAJOR PROFESSOR: DR LISA BROOTEN

This research reveals the opaque social hierarchies which work to structure Black life in contemporary South Africa. Using a multi-modal critical discourse analysis, and four theories: hegemony, neoliberalism, post-feminism and African womanism, this study analyzes the representation of weddings in *Our Perfect Wedding* and *Top Billing Weddings*, two South African wedding reality television programs. In addition, the study examines the TV programs' audience narratives in online spaces. Analyzing online conversations helps to show how audiences actively engage with and interpret messages disseminated by the TV shows as they talk back to the shows and among themselves. The study also examines wedding speeches to understand their role in relation to gender issues in contemporary South Africa.

The findings demonstrate that neoliberal and post-feminist narratives are used to exemplify what is contemporary and attractive. Tied to this, practices and appearances moderated by whiteness are represented as beautiful and normative whereas Blackness and Black feminine looks are either mainstreamed or discarded. The

representations create a binary that is hard to resist between what is represented as modern and attractive versus the African culture that is represented as inconsequential and disposable.

Regarding the TV shows' audiences there is a tension between those who embrace the high class televisual representations of white weddings and those calling for a *return* to African cultural practices and an appreciation of Blackness. Such calls illustrate nostalgia for Blackness. For this reason, these narratives offer insight into the intersection of class and culture and illustrate that Black South Africans are navigating an identity struggle confronted with attractive contemporary life unfolding in a space where African practices are largely marginalized.

Furthermore, wedding speeches with perspectives drawn from the African culture and Biblical scriptures reveal that marriage is constructed around patriarchal beliefs. Wedding speeches structure gender roles and define hegemonic African manhood, a prominent identity that towers over African womanhood. Christian and African cultural beliefs converge to normalize women's subordination and male supremacy in the Black South African society, a contradiction to the attractive images portrayed on TV.

The televisual representation of weddings, online responses to the representations and wedding speeches demonstrate an intersection of issues of culture, class, and gender in modern day South Africa. This intersection demonstrates that Black people are in pursuit of a Black identity confronted with issues of contemporary living while attempting to adhere to what has long been defined as inherent Black cultural practices with highly structured gender roles. Neoliberal and post-feminist narratives, while embraced for their attractive features of glamor in the form of white

weddings, are also feared and resisted for displacing Blackness. Gender norms also complicate the identity picture as they are influenced by African practices that lag behind proclaimed gender equality in present day South Africa.

Keywords: South Africa, gender, television, culture, Black, class

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Memani trio: Yanga, my husband, Liyabulela, my daughter, and Sibulele, my son.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my committee members who have travelled with me from classes I took with them, conference presentations and book chapters we co-authored - to you I say *ukwanda kwaliwa ngumthakathi* [only evil stifles development and progress]. To the Chairperson of my committee, who has been my Advisor from the time I arrived in the Mass Communication and Media Arts (MCMA) College, Dr Brooten – I thank you. Your questions and insightful comments although not always welcomed made me a better thinker, researcher and writer. I apologize for all the heartache I caused you. To Dr Uche for encouraging me never to forget that I am an African, you deserve a Xhosa chieftaincy, replete with subjects. To Dr Aguayo for prodding me along the path of neoliberalism, thank you for helping me discover a gold mine. To Dr Leigh for gently introducing me to post-feminism aware that I challenge everything with a feminist stamp, you expanded my world, so thank you. To Dr Geertsema-Sligh, a fellow South African whose presence in my committee meant I had to always remember never to misrepresent our rainbow nation, *dankie* [thank you].

Thanks also go to Dr Karan whose guidance about meal preparation ensured that I was able to rest between studying and writing knowing that my family would still enjoy a home cooked meal. My sincere thanks also go to Dr Veenstra who opened up the *New Media Study Group* as a safe space for graduate students to complain about college troubles. I also thank the MCMA College for not outright accepting my application to become one of their students. The year I spent as a non-declared student taught me about the value of proving myself.

Of course, to my mother proving myself came as no shock as she tells stories of how as a little girl, I always worked hard to prove people wrong. If anything, I hope I have proven Master, my father, right. I hope he sees me as ever beautiful now with a doctoral degree affixed to our last name. Master values education too much. To encourage us his children to say at school, he would tell us about how beauty works. *Umntu noba mbi ubamhle xa efundile mntwanam* [Even an ugly person becomes beautiful when educated], he would say. He would also add that people tend to be fixated on a person's education rather than their appearance, and when appearance is at stake education takes over.

Today I am grateful to my parents for instilling in me the value of hard work. I am reminded of the years when my mother, armed with a stern face would wake us up at dawn and set us on a journey to the mealie fields. Kicking fresh dew, moaning, and dragging our hoes, we would be the first ones to arrive at the mealie fields and start work immediately. Rest only came when we were almost done, an important lesson for me while working on this project. Anyone who complained of exhaustion was considered ill-disciplined and un-African. Those teachings brought me this far. *Ndiyabulela Nonjani, mama wam* [I thank you my mother].

To my partner of over 19 years with whom I share the most intimate and fulfilling discussions, I owe you a lot. You willingly became *intsika yekhaya lethu* [the stronghold of our home]. To you and our children, Liyabulela and Sibulele who did their best to play quietly when I needed to work on this project *ndiyabulela* [I thank you]. The three of you sacrificed a lot to see me succeed. At times I wondered whether you would say you have had enough. None of you ever did. I thank you for your love and support. I

particularly thank you Yanga for keeping up with a partner who could not financially contribute to the household. *Umvuzo wakho uyakubamkhulu phesheya kwengcwaba* [Your reward will be greater beyond the grave], as we say.

To my siblings, Toto who taught me how to be streetwise, Liziwe, the family's gentle prayer warrior, Lungelwa, my comforter, my brother Lutho who wishes I was born with a penis so he could have an older brother in me, Thwashu, whose courage amazes me greatly, Sira, whose face lights mine up, and Dwin, for whom I wear a confident smile, *ningabantu bantwana basekhaya* [you are good people]. Each of you makes me believe that nothing is impossible to achieve as long as *amathambo am esashukuma* [there is life in my bones].

To the rest of the Solanga clan *ndiyabulela bantakwethu* [I thank you my blood relatives]. To the Memani family, *abantu abandenza umfazi kwaXhosa* [the people who made me a woman in the Xhosa culture] *ndibamba ngazibini* [I thank you]. My gratitude also goes to my friends who have over the years become family to me, you know who you are. Go on, pat yourselves on the backs. You did great supporting this dark person from Ngxakaxa.

To everyone with whom I grew up in Ngxakaxa, to all the mothers and fathers who had a hand in my upbringing for we believe that it takes a village to raise a child, I bow to you. You had your hands full with me. My friends with whom I connect via various online platforms – you are awesome! *Nenze njalo nakwabanye* [Do the same to others]. Many of you reminded me that we lift as we rise, that we are not successful as individuals, but that as Africans our success is measured by the number of people we help lift up. I hope I have not failed you.

I am eternally grateful to everyone whose path crossed mine at Ngxakaxa, T.S. Matsiliza, St James, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, National Treasury, my former colleagues in the South African public service including South African journalists, my colleagues and friends at SIU, the staff at the MCMA Graduate Office, and the staff at the Graduate Office.

Finally, as we say in rallies in South Africa – *Amandla! Ngawethu!* [Power to the people!]. Long Live the spirit of Black consciousness! Long Live!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2	24
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	24
CHAPTER 3	61
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS	61
Data Analyzed	68
CHAPTER 4	77
LITERATURE ON WEDDINGS AND BELIEFS ABOUT AFRICAN MARRIAGE	77
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	96
CHAPTER 5	97
THE DISCOURSE AND REPRESENTATION OF WEDDINGS IN TELEVISION REALITY PROGRAMS	97
CHAPTER 6	133
AUDIENCE FACEBOOK DISCOURSE: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	133
CHAPTER 7	165
THE LANGUAGE OF WEDDING SPEECHES AND THEIR ROLE IN STRUCTURING MARRIAGE	165
CHAPTER 8	194
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	194
REFERENCES	201

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Table 1	147
Table 2	151
Table 3	151
Table 4	153
Table 5	171
Table 6	172
Table 7	172
Table 8	174
Table 9	175
Table 10	180
Table 11	181
Table 12	183
Table 13	186
Table 14	187

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Figure 1	112
Figure 2	114
Figure 3	116
Figure 4	116
Figure 5	116
Figure 6	116
Figure 7	117
Figure 8	120
Figure 9	123
Figure 10	123
Figure 11	125
Figure 12	125
Figure 13	127
Figure 14	127
Figure 15	127
Figure 16 (a) and (b)	128

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Gana! Gana! Hlambani nizokuya emtshatweni kuzakude kube late [you have to bathe so that you can go to the wedding before it's too late], my mother would say around midday on hot December Saturdays. Gana is my nickname. When I was a little girl of about 10 years old growing up in *Ngxakaxa* a village in Duthwa, South Africa, my mother would encourage my sisters and me to go to weddings. My mother often spoke about the importance of being married. A young girl had to aspire to be married.

Nikugcad 'apha nokwenda, [You want to be married but you are lazy], she would say. Talking and teaching about *umtshato* [wedding and marriage] was a way to inspire young girls to work hard to attract suitors for potential marriage later in life. Marriage was idealized and represented as something normative. The alternative, being an unmarried woman, was never directly discussed but clearly abhorred. Also, talking about weddings and marriage life functioned to socialize a young girl into a later life, a life as a married woman.

At wedding events, I enjoyed dancing for the cake because the best dancer would get a big slice of cake. I attended so many weddings that by the time I was a teenager I had pretty much memorized wedding programs. It helped that wedding programs never seemed to change. The standardized programs also meant that I could speculate on the keywords wedding day speakers would use for each of the different speeches listed in wedding day programs. I was often fascinated by the different clothes the bride and groom would wear and the number of times they changed their clothes in

a period of two days. I was always intrigued by the festivities and the public spectacle of weddings in which people performed affection, dress sense, dance moves, speaking eloquence and wisdom, but, I never really thought about what such activities and speeches really meant. As a scholar, I attend weddings with a critical eye and am intrigued by how weddings seem to be sites that embed cultural symbolism. These cultural representations are drawn from 'western' wedding activities and African norms and beliefs about not just weddings but also the *proper way to do* marriage.

I am a Black married South African woman who grew up in South Africa during the apartheid regime. I experienced oppression under white dominance during the apartheid period and am a survivor of various incidents of racist attacks and racially motivated dehumanization. As a system of government, apartheid fell in 1994 with the installation of democracy. Apartheid had replaced colonization, and during both periods Black people were oppressed. Throughout both periods schools were centers of instilling white dominance by primarily exposing Black people to ideologies that affirmed the values of White people. I was trained in Western-centric philosophies that were presented as the only way of thinking. Blackness was ridiculed and ignored. As I grew up I aligned myself with the views of anti-apartheid movements and exposed myself to Steve Biko's notion of Black Consciousness. Steve Biko was an anti-apartheid student leader who was later killed by the apartheid government because of his views.

My position influenced the choice of the theories that underpin this study. These four theories are hegemony, neoliberalism, post-feminism and African womanism. Through these theories, I have two goals. First, I examine whether and how weddings are bound up in notions of hegemonic neoliberalism and post-feminism. Second, using

the concept of Africana womanism, this study aims to examine beliefs communicated via wedding day speeches, specifically the notion of women assenting to 'traditional' African roles. In such roles women are largely restricted to rearing children while a man's role is elevated to that of provider and defender of the home. Overall, this project examines the language used to construct, represent and talk about weddings and to an extent marriage.

In explaining cultural hegemony, Gramsci (1971) states that people and social structures dominant in society construct their definition of reality through the manipulation of cultural symbolism, leading others to accept the defined reality as 'common sense'. In other words, the dominant view is accepted as if there are no alternatives. Neoliberalism, on the other hand, embeds concepts of individuality and empowerment. These concepts are operationalized through the framework of democracy (Harvey, 2005). Post-feminism also includes some of the discourse of neoliberalism. As with neoliberalism, post-feminism also has an "individualist discourse" of choice and empowerment (McRobbie, 2009, p.1). Using a post-feminist discourse, media represent women as empowered individuals who make choices about their representation and in the process, embrace hyper-femininity, which in itself is undergirded by consumerism. Africana womanism, the fourth theory from which I draw is a useful guide from which to map how dominant teachings about African cultural beliefs about marriage are often reinforced in weddings. Africana womanism's basic premise is that African cultural beliefs and practices should be placed at the center of evaluating Africana women's lives. This concept emerged as a challenge to all forms of

feminism since feminist perspectives according to Hudson-Weems (2004) still largely appeal to White women and challenges peculiar to their race.

These four theories inform this study's questions that center on how weddings are represented in the media, how TV audiences in online spaces interpret the representations, and the function of wedding speeches. To answer the research questions, I use multi-modal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) to analyze three different kinds of texts, explained below. MCDA is a method useful to examine "how semiotic choices used in both speech and in visual communication are able to signify broader discourses, signify ideas, values, identities and sequences of activity" (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.11). As an emerging method within the critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach, MCDA combines the analysis of different elements such as written text, images, audio and others. This is important so as to examine ideologies embedded in speech and images about race, class and gender in contemporary South Africa.

My interest in analyzing weddings stems from the observation that these spaces are sites of struggle where hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminism practices that are asserted through class clash with inherent African group norms that have long defined African manhood and womanhood. How then do these imported perspectives impact local cultures? Analyzing the televisual representation of weddings, conversations about these events, and speeches offers a glimpse into the larger issue of how Black South Africans are negotiating what it means to be Black in contemporary South Africa and to be grappling with divergent perspectives.

The three different types of texts analyzed are broken down as follows: the first set contains two episodes of *Our Perfect Wedding*, each averaging one hour in

duration, and two episodes of *Top Billing Weddings* ranging between seven and 10 minutes. The second set of texts analyzed is a total of 40 comments with 20 comments drawn from the Facebook page of *Our Perfect Wedding* and another 20 from the *Top Billing Weddings* Facebook page. The comments are responses to the four episodes analyzed in the first set. The third set of texts analyzed is two speeches by wedding day speakers, one made at a white wedding ceremony and the second given at a 'traditional' wedding. Wedding day speakers generally speak about the meaning of marriage and offer marriage guidance and advice to the couple.

Our Perfect Wedding and *Top Billing Weddings* are the only two wedding television reality programs broadcast in South Africa. *Top Billing Weddings* features weddings of celebrity couples from different racial groups while *Our Perfect Wedding* largely showcases the weddings of Black non-celebrities. *Our Perfect Weddings* is produced by ConnectTV while *Top Billing Weddings* and insert into a full lifestyle magazine show called *Top Billing*. *Top Billing* is produced by *Tswelopele Productions*.

In the South African Black culture there are two different types of weddings – a white wedding and what is popularly referred to as a 'traditional' wedding. In this project, I will also refer to the 'traditional' wedding as an ethnic ceremony. I will use the word 'ethnic' to get away from the trappings and perhaps reductionist implication of the word 'tradition'. Also, using the word 'traditional' is at times as problematic as the word 'history'. Often, these words are neither explained nor contextualized. Instead, an assumption is made that 'tradition' and 'history' are straightforward terms with universal meanings. However, I must mention that as a member of the culture I am researching, I am aware that 'traditional', specifically in the context of this study, is commonly used to

separate the ethnic ceremony that is rooted in African cultural beliefs from the white wedding or modern wedding, which was copied from colonizers. A wedding is traditional when it hinges on ethnic beliefs that are understood to have been practiced in the African culture over a period of time without being wiped away by the influence of the European culture.

South Africa has scant literature on weddings and far behind countries such as the United States and Britain. In these two countries weddings related literature spans the fields of sociology and media studies. The inadequate weddings and marriage research in South Africa means that there is limited knowledge about the larger implications of neoliberalism on the local culture. This is one area in which this study hopes to contribute new knowledge. This is particularly important since such knowledge will emerge from a post-colonial context.

South Africa: A brief history

South Africa is located at the southern tip of the African continent and is home to over 50 million¹ citizens. This is according to the last census taken in 2011. The majority of the population is Black at 79.2 percent, followed by colored (mixed race) people and White people each making up 8.9 percent and lastly people of Indian origin at 2.5 percent.

Historically, the Bantu speaking group of people who originated from the western part of Africa migrated to South Africa around AD 1000 (Worden, 2011, p.1). Much later in the late 1400s and 1650s, the Portuguese and the Dutch allegedly “discovered” South Africa (Thompson, 2000). While the Portuguese were predominantly traders and

¹ <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P03014/P030142011.pdf>

did not make a permanent home in South Africa, the Dutch settled on the Cape shores following the 1652 arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck from The Netherlands. It was not until the 1800s that the British colonized South Africa.

South Africa experienced two periods of Black oppression: first, colonial rule and later apartheid. Established in 1948, apartheid was a system of government based on racial segregation (Worden, 2011, p.2). During the apartheid period, Black people were restricted from accessing certain spaces, particularly spaces inhabited by White people.

In 1994, Black South Africans voted for the first time in the history of the country. Before that election in which the late Dr Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela emerged as the first Black democratically elected president of the country, only White people had full voting rights. At this same time, the world had been globalizing and neoliberal principles of freedom and market deregulation were the order of the day. As such, South Africa emerged from years of sanctions to be exposed to a world in which neoliberalism had become a general practice. Driven by the desire to market itself as a sound economic investment, the country also relaxed its exchange controls, deregulated markets and opened its borders.

In addition, in the 1990s the media were shifting their representation of women. In countries such as the United Kingdom and United States of America, post-feminist ideas were becoming more commonplace. Feminism had been the mantra for decades and activists had for a long time actively resisted representations of women that implied that they were inferior and mostly concerned with displaying their femininity. However, in the 1990s, the media reconstructed femininity and introduced a different feminine representation that still objectified women but used representations suggesting women's

empowerment to mask this objectification. These emerging representations embedded a new language of choice and empowerment, concepts that worked to obscure this pseudo empowerment and choice in which femininity is achieved by spending money (McRobbie, 2009; Roberts, 2007; Genz and Brabon, 2009).

South Africa emerged from periods of Black oppression in the 1990s at the time of hegemonic neoliberalism and post-feminism. African cultural beliefs and practices having survived the colonial and apartheid period continued to be practiced. How these African cultural beliefs and activities interact with the new neoliberal and post-feminist language that came with the 1994 democracy and are represented in reality TV is what this study analyzes. This study also analyzes how Black people negotiate these different notions and how these notions impact the Black identity. The study uses weddings as a departure point.

The Wedding Process in the Black Society in South Africa

In South Africa, weddings are generally celebrated when the weather is beautiful and bright in the summer months (November to January). In the South African Black culture, there are two wedding ceremonies – a white wedding and ‘traditional’ wedding. White weddings are understood to be a legacy of colonization and became popular around the 1930s (see research by Erlank, 2014).

These weddings are preceded by bride-wealth negotiations or *ilobola*. In the past, including when my own mother got married in the late 1970s, *ilobola* was paid by cattle. Currently, the common practice is paying in cash, although this payment is still referred to as *inkomo* or cattle. There is no scientific way of calculating *ilobola*. However, parents can, through the identified negotiators, factor in the loss of their

daughter's financial help to her home (Rudwick and Posel, 2014). Women are not directly involved in bride-wealth negotiations. The negotiations are handled by men. Once an agreement has been reached, *ilobola* can be settled in part or in full. In the past, such as the period when my mother and her mother got married, *ilobola* was not paid in full. In fact, my father still owes my mother's family. However, in the 2000s, my husband paid the full amount for me, a generational shift and prevailing common practice. *Illobola* was in the past generally not paid in full (Price, 1954), and ensured that the husband always owed something to the father of his wife and could be called upon for assistance when needed (Rudwick and Posel, 2014). *Illobola* functions to certify that a couple can proceed to the next step, which is sometimes a white wedding.

Although there are two different weddings, which serve different purposes, a couple who decides to have both a white wedding and a traditional wedding often have the white wedding first. The white wedding is generally hosted in a church or at a rented space and officiated by a Priest. During this ceremony, a bride elegantly dressed in a white bridal gown, with hair styled and pinned with accessories or left to flow over bare shoulders, carries a bouquet of flowers. The epitome of this event is the exchange of vows and rings. Included in the program is time for the wedding party (bride, groom, bridesmaids, grooms men, families and close friends) to take posed wedding photographs. This is often at a predetermined beautiful outdoor venue. In general, a photographer is hired for this purpose and these are photographs that are later displayed in the home of the married couple and shared with loved ones.

After the photography session, the bridal party and guests proceed to the wedding reception, held at a venue decorated with themed colors and features pre-

approved by the bride. The décor on exquisitely set tables varies between elegant modern or 'African' ethnic features or a combination of the two. Included in the fancy printed reception program are slots for speeches by family, friends, the groom and the bride. Speeches include thanking guests, welcoming the couple to a new life and general well wishes for a loving and successful marriage.

The end of the wedding reception brings with it finality to the ceremony's focus on the bride's beauty and elegant gowns. This is because following the reception the bride and her family packs the bride's belongings and gifts in preparation for the journey to the groom's home. It is at the groom's home that the 'traditional' ceremony is held. This is the event that existing scholarly research ignores, creating the idea that Black people only celebrate one wedding ceremony – the white wedding. The traditional wedding also follows some form of program, sometimes printed and sometimes not. On the day of the traditional wedding, the couple and *abakhaphi* or bridesmaids and grooms men may during the morning walk around the groom's home in the white wedding clothes worn the previous day – something that is called *ukunyathela inkundla*. During this same day, they all change clothes such that in the rest of the proceedings they are in clothes inspired by the couples' own ethnic identities – part of the reason this wedding is called traditional. Each wedding is different and this complicates any attempt to try to describe wedding events in a chronological form. For instance, in the context of the traditional wedding there are couples who arrive for the festivities already dressed in traditional clothes.

At the conclusion of the traditional ceremony, sometimes when guests have already left and other times in the presence of guests, the newly wedded woman is

given a new first name, she again changes her clothes, and is given advice about marriage sustenance by elderly women often from the groom's family and the community. This is called *iziyalo* or *ukuyalwa*. Through the speeches the women induct the newly married woman into a new phase of life – a married Black woman's life as a wife. Even couples who elect not to have a white or a traditional wedding will go through a version of this last part. In other words, a newly married Black woman, whether she had been a bride in a bridal gown or whether she had had a traditional wedding, will get a new first name, will be clothed in different clothes that signify a new life phase and will together with her husband or in the absence of her husband be given advice on proper conduct expected of a married woman.

These wedding events are not uniformly celebrated within the Black culture. With intra and inter-ethnic marriages and perhaps with other influences including bi-racial weddings there are differences. However, there are features of each of the two different weddings that remain prominently practiced across the board. For instance, at a white wedding ceremony, there is a bride in a bridal gown and a groom in a suit. Also, the white wedding generally follows what is considered to be Christian values with preaching and prayer. With the ethnic wedding, at some point both the bride and the groom will be dressed in traditional gear, with the bride's attire accompanied by a head scarf.

The general practice in the Black society is for married women to cover their heads. Wedding guests also dress accordingly for each of the wedding ceremonies. For example, guests at an ethnic wedding wear ethnic inspired clothes. One of the most important functions of the traditional wedding is this: it is the route to the bride's *final* destination, hence the isiXhosa phrase: *ingcwaba lentombi lisemzini* [a girl's burial site

is at her in-laws]. This is because following the ethnic wedding, the newly married woman does not return home with her family but is left behind with the groom's family, her new family as a wife. The traditional wedding is therefore a form of ritualistic transition from bride-hood to married womanhood for those who had gone through a wedding. The transition is from girl-hood to married woman-hood for those who do not have any form of wedding ceremony and who following bride-wealth negotiations move straight into married life.

That many Black South Africans also celebrate a white wedding rather than just the ethnic ceremony is a result of cultural contact between Black and White people. Cultural contact between these groups was intensified when the British from the late 1800s colonized South Africa. Colonization disrupted the cultures of the colonized resulting in hybrid cultures (Said, 1993). In fact, it is colonization that introduced Christianity and church weddings or white weddings to Black people. As such, compared to western cultures, white weddings are fairly new in Black South African culture as these only began in 1930s (Erlank, 2014). Before the introduction of Christian weddings the common practice was customary marriages - customary marriages have not altogether faded but are less popular than civil marriages. Customary marriages are those that follow indigenous African practices, are overseen by family members, and do not require solemnization by priests or government officers as is the case with civil marriages.

Since I am umXhosa and my experiences are those of an umXhosa woman with an exposure to other Black South African cultures, when I use the phrase Black South African, it is intended to more generally apply to amaXhosa although similarities exist

among the different Black South African cultures and communities. Also, given that Black people have intra and inter-ethnic marriages that are preceded by wedding celebrations, confining this work to just one ethnic group would be too simplistic and unrealistic. During my participant observation exercises I attended two inter-ethnic wedding ceremonies. In each of these the dress of the brides and grooms drew heavily from each of their ethnic backgrounds.

This section has mapped out the process of weddings beginning with bride-wealth negotiations. There are events that are equally important and are a part of the entire wedding process but are less relevant for this study. Such events have been excluded in this study. Examples of events excluded here are bridal kitchen parties and *umembheso* [the activity of gift giving] that families do as part of the traditional ceremony and the series of activities such as when the newly married woman is given a new first name and similar others. These activities just like the two types of weddings draw from imported practices while some are influenced by African perspectives. For instance, a kitchen party largely draws from White people's practices whereas naming a married woman is inherently a Black South African practice, another illustration of a struggle in the negotiation of a Black identity.

Now that the wedding process has been sketched out below is more information about consumption and what may have contributed to such a practice in the Black society in South Africa. This is important as a way to provide background information necessary to answer the first research question that deals with the representation of weddings on television. This representation as this study will discuss primarily focuses on white weddings with an emphasis on hegemonic consumerism.

Why lavishness? A historical review of politics and policies in South Africa

The democratic government policies post 1994 contributed to Black people's participation in consumerism.

Black Oppression versus White Privilege: Loathing and Desire

The destruction brought about by colonization of African cultures is well documented with writers noting that the British as the dominant nation entrenched their values displacing those of the people they colonized (Said, 1993). Apartheid, as the last and more recent period of Black oppression, is most remembered. Remembered here is not intended in a positive sense. Instead, the word means a historical moment that is in the minds of people because of its brutality and its recent occurrence and ongoing impact. In making an argument about the history of the country I do not pretend that history is linear or is a series of uniform moments. However, I single out colonization and apartheid as two historical moments of White on Black oppression.

During apartheid, the country was segregated and Black people were restricted from accessing certain spaces, particularly spaces inhabited by *wit mense* [White people]. For Black people to move in and out of spaces reserved for White people, they had to carry a Pass or they were jailed and harassed. A Pass regulated Black people's movements within the country. White people lived in affluent, spacious and attractive neighborhoods while laws passed by the apartheid government displaced Black people and relocated them to places far removed from where their White counterparts lived, in what became known as townships. These apartheid laws predominantly applied to

Black people in cities (those who had migrated from Bantustans² in search of work or were from areas on the periphery of cities).

In many cases, Black people existed in white spaces only as servants never able to attain the lifestyles of their masters and madams. Oppression entrenched contradictory and confusing feelings of simultaneous loathing and desire. The loathing arises from the awareness that because of oppression and inequality, Black people would not be able to acquire lavishness and could not afford to live in the places where they worked. Desire, on the other hand, means a longing to live like the privileged White people they served.

The fall of apartheid meant that for the first time, Black people could freely move about and exist in the spaces previously reserved for White people, and no longer just as servants. Democracy also meant that Black people could access different jobs with higher pay and participate in better and more formal business ventures. With improved earnings came the ability to spend and to finally attain the long desired lifestyles of the privileged race. The fall of apartheid, which gave Black South Africans a chance to improve their lives, laid a foundation for a new culture of spending driven by the new found freedom. This new found freedom and ability to spend was also underpinned by neoliberal post-apartheid policies.

Post-Apartheid Policies

Policies introduced early in the democratic period contributed to Black people accessing more money than was possible during periods of Black oppression. These domestic policies such as the Affirmative Action (AA) and Black Economic

² Bantustans are also known as homelands – regions set aside for Black people during apartheid.

Empowerment (BEE) helped to create new classes of Black people, the middle class and the rich (Ponte, Roberts and Van Sittert, 2007). These are the high spenders in society.

After the fall of apartheid and the installation of democracy in 1994, South Africa became a country reconstituted on freedom. Economic sanctions imposed by foreign countries as a way to pressure the apartheid government to open negotiations with freedom fighters were withdrawn. In addition, the government adopted a growth and redistribution strategy commonly referred to as Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). GEAR was intended to signal to the international investment community that South Africa was following good financial and economic strategies and was open for business (Weeks, 1999). As a result, market and trade policies including exchange controls were liberalized (Pollin, Epstein, Heintz, and Ndikumana, 2009). This marked the beginning of neoliberal perspectives.

Through these policies, the South Africa government was doing what it could to promote the country as a safe destination for foreign investment. Indeed, unlike other African countries South Africa was soon recognized as an emerging market economy. As this process of exposure to the world was happening, globalization was a keyword. This means that South Africa entered a rapidly globalizing world in which smaller economies became sites for the exports of bigger economies.

The relaxed exchange control policies opened South Africa's borders to an influx of foreign cultural products. Legislation also allowed for foreign ownership of local media organizations (Duncan and Seleokane, 1998). As a result, although Black people were exposed to foreign media content during apartheid, the volume of international

programs increased in the democratic era. Foreign content predominantly exposed South Africans to the flamboyant lifestyles of U.S. celebrities in particular.

Regarding post-apartheid policies aimed at improving the lives of citizens, two policies are relevant. These are Affirmative Action (AA) and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). The AA policy, aimed at redressing years of Black oppression, meant that many Black people could also be considered for employment opportunities from which they were previously excluded. This increased Black people's earning potential, improved their living standard and upgraded their social status. BEE on the other hand, provided Black people with access to business opportunities, skills development and other economic improvement programs previously unavailable. Black people could now own businesses and participate in lucrative business ventures.

Much like AA, BEE, although heavily criticized in the media and by scholars such as Ponte, Roberts and Van Sittert (2007) for only helping a few Black people get richer, opened up empowerment opportunities and placed wealth (however limited in relation to lifting millions of Black people out of poverty) in Black hands. Suddenly, Black people could participate not just in boardrooms, in radio studios, television productions, sports from which they were previously restricted but also in the economy of the country as consumers. Some Black people became upwardly mobile, became celebrities and displayed their mobility publicly through consumption and widened class based gaps within the Black race. These class based tensions are explored further in Chapters Five and Six. Later, President Mbeki, the second democratically elected South African president, would lament the elite ways of the new middle class whom he called the

'comprador bourgeoisie'.³ To Mbeki the comprador bourgeoisie firmly assisted by the BEE policies assumed the personality of capitalists.

However, the point is not that excessive spending began in the post-apartheid period. Indeed, Erlank (2014) traces records indicating that in the 1930s as white weddings in the Black culture took off, there was concern about lavishness. She cites records of meeting proceedings of church leaders who were concerned about the rising price of Black people's white weddings. The difference between the 1930s and the present period is the large number of Black people who have become neoliberal subjects demonstrating intra race class based tensions, discussed in Chapters Five and Six. Chapter Five shows how participants in wedding reality shows embrace neoliberal and post-feminist views of high spending. For some, the televisual representations that glamorize the consumerist culture are a cause for moral panics as discussed on Chapter Six.

The post-apartheid period is a way to think about the impact of suddenly being able to afford what was previously desired but could not be attained because of oppressive policies and large scale unaffordability as a result of low incomes and rampant poverty. The conspicuous wedding spending therefore functions as a strong symbol of having attained the freedom to participate in and to emulate activities of a race and class from which most Black people were previously forbidden. In this sense, consumption illustrates membership in a different/better class. Excessive spending is

³ Mbeki made these remarks in his letter to South African President Mr Jacob Zuma following his recall from office as the President of the Republic in late 2008. The letter is available on this link <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/mbeki-s-letter-to-the-anc-1.422603#.VkULbCxdHZ4> Mbeki's assertions are also published in the 2014 edition of the magazine, *The Thinker* - <http://www.thethinker.co.za/resources/Thinker%2059%20full%20mag.pdf>

also a visual representation of money and social class that plays out on screen and online as televisual representations work to box up Black people of different social classes and as audiences negotiate beliefs about their Blackness in a neoliberal space. In particular, the better class that is displayed via consumerism conflicts with inherent African practices as money asserts a power to act as an individual unconstrained by group norms with very little if any challenge from the community. This contradicts African cultural values of 'community above an individual', something that contradicts neoliberal and post-feminist narratives of individuality.

Study Significance

Reality TV and the representation of weddings have generally been examined from a 'western' perspective. This has meant that there is limited research on weddings media in post-colonial settings such as South Africa. This study will attempt to disrupt this predominant focus on 'western' contexts by illustrating how imported beliefs impact local cultural norms presenting weddings as sites of tension in which Black people are engaged in a struggle to define Blackness in modern day South Africa. In addition, this study will move scholarship forward by expanding focus beyond just white weddings as is the current practice. This is important particularly in South Africa with a Black society that has at least two types of weddings, the white and the ethnic wedding.

This study crisscrosses the fields of sociology, media, culture and communication. In fact, this study fits in with the interdisciplinary nature of mass communication and media studies by examining the televisual representation of weddings, audience engagement with the weddings reality programs, and ideas about gender that are either normalized or resisted through the dissemination of beliefs during

weddings. Wedding day speeches provide an opportunity to examine the construction and representation of gender relationships in society via a language that is one part Christian and another part African and coded as marriage advice. This advice converges to entrench patriarchy in the Black society in South Africa.

Situated at the intersection of culture, class, and gender in South Africa, this research reveals the opaque social hierarchies which work to structure Black life in the country.

Structure of the Document

Following this introductory chapter, the rest of this study is arranged in chapters two to eight as follows:

Chapter 2 discusses four theories: hegemony, neoliberalism, post-feminism, and African womanism, which are used as the theoretical frameworks for this study. South Africa emerged from periods of Black oppression in the 1990s at the time when hegemonic neoliberalism and post-feminism had a firm grip in the developed world. With South Africa, a young democratic country intent on changing its reputation and marketing itself as a viable investment destination, the South African government jumped on the bandwagon and for the external environment relaxed exchange controls while domestically they introduced policies to improve the lives of Black people who had been oppressed. The domestic policies opened up space for Black South Africans to participate in the economy of the country. At this same time, the country also allowed an influx of foreign media products that began to expose media audiences to contemporary practices and representations of people, spaces and wealth. These four theories allow for an examination of South African produced media artefacts to which audiences are

exposed and the tensions within the Black race, tensions about class and gender that are evident but largely masked in televisual representations of weddings but emerge strongly in audience conversations. Using the four theories reveals how Black people are negotiating their lives in a space where their identity is constructed from a hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminist perspective via television and through notions of 'proper' African womanhood and manhood avowed in societal weddings, ideas articulated by Africana womanists.

Chapter 3 explains multi-modal critical discourse analysis (MCDA), the methodology used to analyze three different data sets that total 46 individual texts. The data come from two wedding reality television shows - *Our Perfect Wedding* and *Top Billing Weddings* - Facebook comments made by audiences of these TV shows, and wedding day speeches. MCDA's basic assumption is that discourse is multi-modal and goes beyond just words to include visual analysis. Furthermore, this methodological approach reveals how social power, domination and inequality are created and sustained and challenged in daily life through various texts including those produced and disseminated by the media.

Chapter 4 provides a snapshot of the field of wedding media that integrates the historical development and function of reality television, white weddings and beliefs about African marriage. The chapter outlines key narratives in research conducted about weddings noting that most of the literature has a single focus on white weddings as spaces of excessive spending where brides' bodies are scrutinized. Although literature on African marriage is scant, it provides a glimpse into the patriarchal organization of African marriage.

Chapter 5 investigates how the two South African wedding reality TV programs represent weddings and finds that the representation mode of both shows hinges on normalizing beliefs about the necessity of white weddings and the disposable nature of ethnic ceremonies. White weddings are a permanent representational feature in the TV shows irrespective of the class of participants, while traditional weddings are predominantly associated with people in the lower levels of society. Furthermore, when represented, traditional weddings are backgrounded. Similarly, Black feminine looks are represented as inferior to those of White women as the shows predominantly feature brides with hair that emulates a Eurocentric feminine appearance. Ultimately, whiteness is represented as stable and attractive while Blackness is largely erased and represented as disposable and insignificant. Beyond high spending, these representations signify other neoliberal and post-feminist perspectives of individuality and choice that clash with African group norms of collectivism and culturally defined conduct.

Chapter 6 provides insight into the ways in which audiences of the two reality wedding television programs engage with the media texts. The chapter illustrates that while audiences stay within the narrative framework of the shows by commenting about white weddings and judging bridal appearances they also resist the representations by calling attention to the shows' role of normalizing excessive spending in relation to white weddings. In talking back to the shows and among themselves, audiences also make a call to Black South Africans to replace white weddings by only celebrating traditional weddings. From this perspective, audiences also use culture to challenge the hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminist notion of consumerism and choice. For some,

culture, in the form of traditional weddings is used to define the “right” type of wedding for Black South Africans.

Chapter 7 examines wedding day speeches and illustrates that Biblical and African cultural beliefs converge to normalize women’s subordination and male supremacy in the Black South African society. The chapter provides insight into beliefs about gender in the Black South African society with hegemonic African manhood, a celebrated identity while African womanhood is represented as inferior. The wedding speeches normalize inequality not just in marriage but in society in general. Yet, these beliefs about African manhood and womanhood contradict neoliberal beliefs of individuality and the equality asserted in the South African Constitution.

Chapter 8 concludes the research project and stresses the identity burden faced by Black South Africans as they navigate the contradictions presented by imported neoliberal and post-feminist perspectives which are dissimilar to African cultural values and practices. These contradictions demonstrate the ways in which imported perspectives impact local identities placing culture squarely against what is represented as modern and attractive.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This section discusses four theories: hegemony, neoliberalism, post-feminism, and African womanism, used as the frameworks for this study. In 1994, South Africa emerged from a period of Black oppression and sanctions at the time of hegemonic neoliberalism and post-feminism in other parts of the world. African cultural beliefs and practices, having survived the colonial and apartheid periods, continue to be practiced. By using neoliberalism and post-feminism that couch those narratives of individuality, consumerism and choice which often accompany the principle of democracy, this study will examine how such narratives interact with hegemonic African beliefs and practices as articulated through Africana womanism. Africana womanism is a concept that argues for the Afrocentric perspectives and an appreciation of the African culture that values group norms over individuality. Specifically, in the context of this study, African beliefs and narratives emphasize group identity and promote the notion of women agreeing to certain traditional roles, and women focusing less on themselves as individuals and more on the family and community.

Through these frameworks, this study will analyze the ideology embedded in the images and language of wedding television programs, and the language used by audience members when commenting on the shows' Facebook pages, and in speeches during wedding events. In other words, this study will investigate how hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminist principles intersect with Africana womanism in the context of weddings in the Black culture in South Africa. As this study will illustrate, weddings are sites where cultural symbolism between democratic principles of individual freedom

and African beliefs about group norms and identity coincide. Each of these notions is accompanied by pressure from different social structures such as the media, churches and families to conform. With this in mind I will examine the ways in which pervasive wedding imagery and language now incorporated as commonsense, influence how people think about, relate to, talk about and do weddings.

Hegemony: Commonsense and Dominance

The theoretical starting point of this study is grounded in theories of hegemony and the ways in which practices and beliefs become commonsense in society. Commonsense refers to beliefs and practices that have become entrenched, accepted and are practiced as if there are no alternatives. In conceptualizing the concept of cultural hegemony, Gramsci (1971) tried to explain the reasons fascism could be sustained when the dominant or ruling elites were not forcing their ideas on the peasants. He argues that in part, hegemony happens when “great masses of people give spontaneous consent to the general direction imposed by a dominant group” (Gramsci, 1971, p.12). This means that people are not forced but agree nonetheless.

Hegemony is therefore not always coerced or enforced (Hall, 1996). Hall (1996) argues that hegemony is complex and follows a "process of coordination of the interests of the dominant group and other groups within society" (p.423). In other words, hegemony does not solely depend on the dominant group; it requires the involvement of people who will conform to the ideologies defined by the elite. This means that hegemony is dominance that functions to ensure conformity by subaltern groups (Howson and Smith, 2008). Hegemony can also be thought of as the power a supreme group has over another that is achieved through “force and persuasion” (Fontana, 2008,

p.88). This means that people are not ruled by force alone but also by ideas. It is the ideologies of those with power that are entrenched as “commonsense” in society.

Gramsci (1971) identified those people he referred to as intellectuals or as having a role in perpetuating and sustaining ideologies that are accepted as commonsense. Intellectuals function to help sustain the structures of dominance by mediating between the state and the people so that people conform to the system of dominance (Fontana, 2008). However, for intellectuals to be successful they ought to be knowledgeable about the desires of the people they seek to influence. Importantly, the civil society is important for ensuring that hegemony is sustained. Civil society institutions such as family, schools, churches and the mass media are important in maintaining and defending hegemony through the ideologies they communicate. Hegemony occurs through a connection of two things - a subaltern group and “commonsense” largely entrenched at the civil society level (Howson and Smith, 2008). Gramsci’s intention was to make clear that those who ensure that certain ideologies are sustained are not just those in government enforcing their ideas on people.

Hegemony is not about complete subordination by an elite group over one that is inferior. The elite are themselves not a homogeneous group nor are they a "unified class" (Hall, 1996, p.423). In other words, hegemony is not based on a specific economic class. Instead, hegemony transcends the corporate limits of purely economic solidarity, encompasses the interests of other subordinate groups, and begins to propagate itself throughout society (Hall, 1996). As such, hegemony does not occur on a simple class differentiated basis but expands to other areas of social life where dominance is affirmed over inferior groups.

How did Gramsci conceive of this hegemony? The word 'hegemony' derives from the Greek and means ruler or leader and indexes the superior standing of an individual or group (Fontana, 2008). In addition, hegemony in pre-Gramscian times was also used to mean joining freely because of imminent threat of being overpowered, thus consenting to power. In ancient Greek, this meant an alliance in which the state gains military and political leadership (Fontana, 2008). The first instance of use is in reference to 'hegemonism', which meant domination and power by states dominating over other inferior states (Fontana, 2008, citing Scruton, 1982). The second usage has links to the Russian Social Democratic Party and was used by Trotsky and Lenin (Fontana, 2008; Hall, 1996). Its use meant political and social control of the elite over the working class and peasants, control to which these exploited groups would be conscious of but still consent (Fontana, 2008; Hall, 1996). Lenin used the term to refer to the leadership, which the Russian leaders had to institute over the poor in constructing a socialist state (Hall, 1996). Ultimately, Gramsci's use of the term was a way to articulate how power is sustained over time and how power defines the rules for others in society to follow.

What is important to note is the idea that hegemony defines what has been accepted as "natural" or "commonsense" in society. As such, hegemony, given its meaning specifically about the notions of consent, and what is "commonsense", becomes a central concept from which to examine the workings of the media, particularly the wedding media, an examination conducted below.

Hegemony and the wedding media

A number of scholars have used the concept of hegemony as a framework from which to examine wedding media and weddings in general. Scholars such as Lewis

(1997) focus on wedding photography noting that the photographs illustrate a hegemonic adherence to traditional gender roles. More recently, wedding photography has been studied in South Africa by Mupotsa (2015) who notes a hegemonic focus on the bride. Also, analyzing wedding photography, Kimport (2012) discusses that even same-sex couples adhere to what has been normalized as behavior of a marrying couple. For an example, the spouse who is the bride blushes. In other words, wedding photographs of same-sex couples illustrate that these couples' behavior is similar to that observed in weddings of heterosexual couples.

Hegemony has also been applied to wedding reality television programs. Engstrom and Semic (2003) in their analysis of the reality wedding television show, *A wedding story* note a dominant use of a Christian language in weddings, something they term religious hegemony. Similarly, Heise (2012) also argues for what she calls marital hegemony. With marriage connected to weddings, Heise (2012) explains that marital hegemony is enforced by attractive representations of white weddings as necessary events in the lifetime of a human being. These representations lead people to consider marriage a common-sense aspect of life.

In a study examining wedding reality shows and another investigating wedding magazines, Engstrom (2012; 2008) uses hegemony to explore the representation of brides and notes that these two bridal media types teach women to consider their appearance as the most important feature of the day. Similar observations are made by Otnes and Pleck (2013) who argue that in weddings and in wedding photography brides are framed as show stars. Engstrom (2012) also observes that these dominant

representations of brides have been standardized and have become accepted as commonsense in society.

Neoliberalism: History, meaning and dominant language

Globally, a series of historical political, social and economic activities contributed to neoliberalism. According to Harvey (2005) in the context of the United States of America, neoliberal practices began in the 1970s. This followed the failures of “embedded liberalism”, which had meant regulated market processes and state control of some of the sectors of the economy. Embedded liberalism had been successful in restoring economic growth following the Second World War. However, in the 1960s inflation set in resulting in stagnant profits and rising unemployment. With embedded liberalism failing, a new economic strategy was needed to rebalance the situation, and ensure wealth creation –thus the birth of neoliberalism. State control of certain sectors of the economy and market regulation was gradually eroded. What emerged is a project designed to ensure capital accumulation “guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade with assumptions of individual freedom” (Harvey, 2005, p.7). It is this neoliberal thinking that South Africa embraced as the country emerged from apartheid in the 1990s, a political economic framework that had been in place in other parts of the world for at least 20 years and had gradually become a hegemonic approach in democratic countries.

But, what do we mean when we talk about neoliberalism? There are several words that are often used in attempts to define neoliberalism. Some of these words include individual, freedom and markets (Peck, 2001; Navarro 2007). The neoliberal discourse embeds these concepts of individuality and empowerment, makes them

appear as attractive values which are in turn operationalized through the concept of democracy (Harvey, 2005; Dutta, 2012). Using the concept of democracy, attractive especially when juxtaposed with for instance, oppression, neoliberal principles mobilize consent. Using this type of language eases the process of accepting neoliberalism to an extent that people consent to the narratives and do not question the logic that underpins the concept.

Concepts of choice and freedom work to disguise the evidence of neoliberalism particularly the ideology of consumption. Commonsense becomes “good sense” and is used to justify actions taken under the guise of democracy (Harvey, 2005, p.39). These actions are not always for the benefit of the society (Fenton, 2011; Navarro 2007). However, the negative effects are masked by the narratives of democracy and individual freedom as the opposite of oppression. In addition, neoliberalism is based on the idea of consumer choice in itself, not confined to specific goods and services, but expanded to “lifestyles, modes of expression, and a wide range of cultural practices” (Harvey, 2005, p.42). It is these cultural practices that are of particular interest in this study.

In addition, choice is often constructed and represented as people actively choosing something they can afford. Yet, it is only those with the financial means to purchase goods and services from the market who are able to exercise choices. The notion of choice is not just about the market responding to people’s needs nor is it about demand and supply as is often presented, but is a response to “money and those who have the power and privileges to pay for their wants” (Bargh, 2007, p.9). What is also not made clear is that choice and freedom come with responsibilities particularly if

people have limited funds but want to participate in lifestyles made to appear attractive. As Bargh (2007) argues, the responsibility for choices made is not always made clear in neoliberal discourse. The choices may propel individuals into a debt trap and social ruin.

Freedom and choice come with responsibility and where individuals fail they are blamed for the failure. What is important to note is that neoliberalism is not about people but about markets. Even the government has a very limited role beyond deregulating the markets (Harvey, 2005; Marais, 2001; Navarro 2007). In fact, the function of the government is to create an environment that is conducive for markets to flourish. Also, the government's responsibility is to preserve freedom and to ensure that trade barriers are reduced in other countries to allow for a movement of goods, services and capital (Bargh, 2007). In fact, "free trade, free mobility of capital and a reduced role of the state" are central tenets of neoliberalism because the markets rather than governments are constructed as being able to "enhance individual freedom" (Harvey, 2005, p.1-8). This rhetoric of individual freedom goes together with individual choice and conceals the workings of the market in trapping people into consuming goods and services they cannot afford, something for which individuals are sometimes later punished.

Anywhere in the world, investors do not invest their money if they are not convinced that the investment destination is secure. This means that an additional role of any government that needs to boost foreign direct investment is to ensure law and order (Marais, 2001; Bargh, 2007; Gürcan and Peker, 2015). The markets function as instructors that dictate rules to governments (Holborow, 2015). Without functioning markets neoliberalism does not thrive (Peck 2001). For neoliberalism to work the markets work together with other powerful institutions to determine the playing field and

its rules. In turn, the governments have to adhere to prescribed market terms, particularly governments in the global south that need to boost their economic standing and economic activities. Even the very choices individuals are purported to make are regulated by the markets (Dutta, 2012). As such, the concept of freedom benefits the markets (Fenton, 2011). Individuals are at the mercy of powerful institutions and market forces.

What are these powerful institutions? Such institutions include multinational corporations and organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the World Trade Organization (Harvey, 2005; Marais, 2001; Bargh, 2007; Navarro 2007; Dutta, 2012). For the world at large, particularly for the developing world, it is through these institutions that neoliberalism is enacted via policies that are exported to other countries under the claim of eliminating poverty, concealing the reality that those who benefit are not the poor but the rich (Dutta, 2012; Navarro 2007; Bargh, 2007). Rather than focus on the rich and their policies, the script is flipped such that people talk about poverty rather than wealth and the wealthy.

Multinational financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund do not function alone. The media, businesses and universities are other institutions through which neoliberal principles are entrenched (Hallin, 2008; Harvey, 2005). In advocating for freedom, businesses and the media obscure the reality that they monopolize and influence great masses of people for their own gain, and in so doing negatively affect the less privileged in society.

Poor people and their cultures are generally the most negatively affected. Patel (2007) discusses how neoliberalism takes away from the poor to feed the rich. Yet, in its

presentation to poor people, neoliberalism is made to seem beneficial (Navarro, 2007). Regarding cultural values, Bargh (2007) states that dominant societies export their cultural products to those countries considered inferior, such as cultures in the global South. However, the explanation often put forward is that an attempt is being made to “raise living standards”, yet, what occurs is cultural homogenization (p.12). In a global competitive world, local cultures lose out.

Improving living standards is often linked rhetorically with modernizing the lives of the poor. However, Prudham (2004) demonstrates that neoliberal policies are also detrimental to people. In a study conducted in Canada, Prudham (2004) blames the deaths and illnesses of residents on neoliberal policies implemented in response to market trends without concern for environmental impact. Navarro (2007) also argues that neoliberal policies have negative health outcomes on peoples of the developing world. Yet, the voices of affected people are often ignored (Dutta, 2012; Navarro 2007). In other words, local voices are either erased or marginalized in stories about neoliberal projects across the globe.

As a theory, neoliberalism provides an important framework for a study that explores the intersections of media and culture in a developing democratic country, particularly the notions of consumption and choice. Also, using neoliberalism opens up space to think about cultural imperialism. The impact of neoliberalism on the culture of Black South Africans is an important consideration in this study. South Africa was under British imperial rule from 1800s. Said (1993) states that during the colonization period, imperialist cultures disrupted those of the colonized whom they considered to be inferior others. This implies that South Africa was also negatively impacted by colonization.

Colonization did not only mean land seizure and cultural encroachment by a dominant nation but it also perpetuated an ideology of self-inferiority to the colonized. The British as the dominant culture entrenched their culture displacing that of the inferior other – Black South Africa. This does not mean that Black people did not contest the dominance (Biko, 1978; Said, 1993). However, while colonization ended decades ago, the ideology which “affirms the superlative values of white people” continues (Said, 1993, p.101). This occurs while the former colonized people face identity struggles.

It is still the values of the imperialists that are illuminated in a great number of social practices in the Black culture. This is because while colonization ended, imperialism “lingers on” Said, 1993, p.9). The domination was not only through “physical force but more effectively by persuasive means – hegemony” (Said, 1993, p.109). Hegemony, explains Said (1993) is evident in everyday life interactions between white and non-white people with “the image of western imperial authority being attractive” (p.110). Through imperialism, cultural practices and beliefs were introduced and reinforced. But, if there is one thing Foucault teaches, it is that power can be resisted as this study shows on Chapter Six.

Resistance to Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism can be and is being resisted. Writing in the context of Latin America, Silva (2009) narrates stories of how people between 1989 and 2002 organized against the oppressive social exclusion that came with the introduction of neoliberalism. For the most part, the activists used street protest strategies and brought the economies of their countries to a standstill. Gürcan and Peker (2015) tell similar stories of collective action organized to disrupt neoliberalism and its exploitive forces in Turkey. Similarly,

Bargh (2007) discusses how Māori people in New Zealand resist neoliberal practices since they believe in a “diverse and holistic” approach to life rather than embracing a market based attitude (p.15). What the Māori people stress is that neoliberalism has to function alongside their approach to life rather than dominating it (Bargh, 2001; 2007). This resists the idea that what is foreign is better and should replace what is local.

Dutta (2012) also uses what he calls a culture centered approach to explain how voices from the global South disrupt hegemonic neoliberalism using online communication platforms such as *YouTube*. By using online spaces, the silenced have found their voices and are moving away from the margins and becoming agents of change in resisting Eurocentric frameworks (Dutta, 2012). These Eurocentric frameworks include the production of knowledge and the knowledge itself that ultimately gets passed around as commonsense.

Also, embedded in neoliberalism is the practice of representing the global South using Eurocentric perspectives (Dutta, 2012). This is also noted by Nyamnjoh (2006) who argues that when conducting investigations, researchers “adopt research techniques designed to answer to the needs of Western societies and which do not always suit African cultures or societies that are in the main rural and non-literate” (p.2). In fact, in the context of media and communication studies, Gunaratne (2009) has argued that there is long practice of embracing “European universalism” in research even in non-European contexts (p.366). This author also explains that even western-trained non-Western scholars can “eagerly” advance European universalism for their scholarly productivity (p.376). In addition, Wang and Kuo (2010) write of similar concerns expressed in the Asian context about the dominance of Eurocentric

perspectives in communication research. To correct the flaw, Asian researchers made concerted attempts at finding alternatives to 'western' inspired theories and instead used Asian culturally influenced approaches.

This illustrates the various contexts, ways and instances including in communication research in which neoliberal principles have been challenged. Although resisted, neoliberal principles are still embraced by individuals and institutions and these principles manifest as dominant ideologies in the realm of media and culture as post-feminist scholars indicate. Chapter Six builds on these points about a simultaneous embrace and resistance of neoliberal practices.

Post-feminism: The dominant notions of empowerment, consumerism and choice

South Africa experienced two periods of Black oppression, the most recent being apartheid. During apartheid, the period before the 1994 democracy, the energies of Black⁴ South Africans were channeled toward fighting apartheid, a system of government premised on racial segregation rather than gender based discrimination. For this reason, Black women and men banded together to fight against racism, first and foremost. During this same period, in the rest of the world, people were involved in other struggles important to them including the civil rights movement in the U.S. Women in Britain and the U.S. in particular had been organizing themselves in movements such as the women's rights movement and its advancement of feminism. South Africans, on the other hand, had their first conference on Women and Gender in 1991, a conference that "did not depart from the norm of male dominated conferences" (Horn, 1991, p.85). Horn (1991) admits that the main struggle during the conference was constructing "unity

⁴ Black here means the broad categorization that includes Coloured and Indian people.

among feminists” (p.86). In other words, Black women were still marginalized by the very group of White people making a call for unity among women.

Introducing post-feminism this way is intentional to assert that Black women in South Africa missed the feminism bandwagon, so to speak. The point here is that as South Africa emerged from Black oppression, the country and its women joined a world that was embracing post-feminist principles that include hyper-femininity, and notions of individuality and choice. These notions closely resemble neoliberal principles. In embracing democracy and its principles of freedom, choice and the right of the individual, South Africa was also taking on board a post-feminist discourse that went together with the associated representation of women in the media. This is why post-feminism is relevant in this study.

An acknowledgement that post-feminism is a continuously developing concept is important to make. The title of Coppock, Haydon and Richter’s (1995) book, *The Illusions of ‘Post-Feminism’: New Women, Old Myths* although published over two decades ago is telling and indicative of the ongoing theorization happening in the field. For instance, there is recognition that post-feminism continues to be reworked and “engaged with” (Xinari, 2010, p.11). More recently, Ortner (2014) has questioned the very notion of post-feminism particularly in relation to what she sees as sustained patriarchal values arguing that it is “too soon for post-feminism” (p.530). This study proceeds with an understanding of the position taken by some scholars that post-feminism, unlike feminism is not a fully-fledged theory. What post-feminism means and the scope of its use continues to be worked out.

What is post-feminism? Post-feminism is both a concept and cultural phenomenon that requires an understanding of the history and historical changes within feminism (Tasker and Negra, 2007). This is because post-feminism engages with, while simultaneously challenging feminism. A historical review of feminism as it relates to post-feminism is necessary. Genz and Brabon (2009) trace post-feminism to the early 1900s stating that during this time feminism was seen to have achieved its goals and some people argued had become unnecessary following the achievement of the women's right to vote. As a phrase, post-feminism was first used in 1919 by a US American women's literary group called Judy (Harzewski, 2011; Genz and Brabon, 2009). The group called itself post-feminist and in its journal wrote that they were interested in people rather than men and women, introducing the argument that feminism was no longer necessary (Harzewski, 2011). The word 'post' illustrated a move beyond a need for feminism.

This argument that feminism was no longer necessary was also taken up in 1919 by the media and from this point the media would consistently criticize feminists. Tensions between the media on the one hand and feminists on the other especially became heightened in incidents that occurred in the late 1960s (Genz and Brabon, 2009). This period includes the media's interpretation of what has become known as the 'bra burning' incident at the Miss USA pageant in 1968 where feminists protested against the parading of women as symbols of beauty as if women were only interested in their appearance (Genz and Brabon, 2009). Idealized beauty standards paraded in beauty contests were seen as a way to pressure women to prioritize appearance. As a result, what feminists decried was the notion of reinforcing "lookism" (Lazar, 2011,

p.37). From this point on, the media would characterize feminists as anti-feminine and would continue to misconstrue the goal of women's emancipation efforts (Genz and Brabon, 2009). This was misreading of the goals of feminism.

It was also during the 1960s that Betty Friedan through her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, rejected femininity and the home, calling these an enslavement of women. Friedan's views as Genz and Brabon (2009) argue were instrumental in showing how in the post-Second World War period women were restricted to the home as men once more took up jobs in the public space. At the same time, the popular media's representations of women framed women as happy to be back within the bounds of the home. Through her book, Friedan encouraged women to reject subjugation and domestication and to seek participation outside the home (Genz and Brabon, 2009). However, the media mocked women.

In media representations of women, women were portrayed as wanting to be "superwomen" and ending up dissatisfied, a backlash against feminism's goals (Genz and Brabon, 2009; Coppock, Haydon and Richter, 1995). To make the point about the media's claim that women wanted to be at home, Genz and Brabon (2009) refer to an article in *Cosmopolitan*, a women's magazine that argued that young women wanted to be domesticated and were happy to fulfill that role. Scholars such as Coppock, Haydon and Richter (1995) also argue that there were "claims that women are desperately unhappy with their new status and that feminism was the culprit" (p.5). This regression from second wave feminism is also noted in how women embrace hyper-femininity (Harzewski, 2011). This is what has been seen as a shift away from feminism or a

backlash against feminism (Genz and Brabon, 2009; Harzewski, 2011). Reading an embraced hyper-femininity pretends that women have no agency and is reductive.

Post-feminist scholars argue that post-feminism is not a backlash against feminism (McRobbie, 2009). Rather, post-feminism is positively influenced by feminism. Although women may not identify as feminists, they still embed feminist beliefs of equality into their actions and approach to life (McRobbie, 2009). This means that feminism has neither been abandoned nor has it failed and should not be seen as a separate ideology from post-feminism (McRobbie, 2009; Harzewski, 2011). These scholars understand post-feminism as being representative of feminism's developments. Post-feminism also shows that there are coexisting multilayered interrelationships between the two concepts and phenomena (McRobbie, 2009). This emerging concept demonstrates "ongoing transformation and change" rather than an anti-feminist stance (Brooks, 1997, p.1). However, post-feminism problematizes the manner in which feminism had been dealing with femininity as if feminism and femininity are polar opposites (McRobbie, 2009). What is key is that feminist principles are still alive.

Most relevant for this project is the discourse that is embedded in post-feminist narratives. Post-feminism is riddled with an "individualist discourse" of choice and empowerment, which has been incorporated into everyday life (McRobbie, 2009, p.1). The media's representation of women as empowered consumers places great emphasis on individuality and consumption (Tasker and Negra, 2007; Roberts, 2007). Yet, what the media normalize through this kind of representation and language is consumerism and a narrow feminine ideal (Genz and Brabon, 2009; Roberts, 2007;

Lazar, 2011; Tasker and Negra, 2007; Harzewski, 2011). The media use women as commercial instruments while pretending that women are empowered and knowledgeable individuals (Springer, 2007; Tasker and Negra, 2007; Roberts, 2007). Focusing on the empowerment deflects attention away from the glamorized high spending.

Also, the media through reality programs, teach women to hide their imperfections or those things that are deemed socially unacceptable and to conceal their real social status so that they can pass as members of a higher social class (Roberts, 2007). To pass, women have to spend money fixing what the media suggest is wrong with them. In so doing, the media convince women about “commercial beautification” and construct a narrow beauty standard as “normative” (Lazar, 2011, p.37). This is evident in reality programs such as the British version of *What Not to Wear*, *How Do I Look?* and others, since these are filled with a discourse of falsehood used by the programs teach women to conceal their true selves by hiding imperfections rather than accepting who they are (Roberts, 2007). In this same discourse, women are given advice on how to dress and conduct themselves in ways that make them pass as members of a higher social class. What happens is that what is socially acceptable in terms of beauty, feminine standards and social class are constructed by the media and presented to women as the only way to do their lives.

With the exception of one author, Springer (2007), all other authors noted here articulate post-feminism from the standpoint of White women. In fact, Springer (2007) argues that as a concept, post-feminism does not address issues of equality. She argues that the issue of equality has long been questioned by Black feminists and other

feminists of color specifically the question of equal to what. This is because Black men are also generally oppressed in society. Therefore, Springer (2007) asks whether Black women should aspire to be equal to an equally oppressed group and proceeds to examine what she calls the racial agenda of post-feminism in a post-civil rights context in the United States of America.

Just like feminism was initially created by and for White women, post-feminism is no different. Post-feminism also has a racial preoccupation with White women to the extent that it includes Black women only to fetishize and 'commodify' difference without questioning the conflation of freedom and consumption (Springer, 2007). The racial agenda of post-feminism shows up in the narratives and constructions of women as if they are universal when in fact, the narrative applies to White women (Springer, 2007; Tasker and Negra, 2007). For instance, the notion of strong woman or superwoman and the 'having it all narrative' that post-feminism dismantles does not consider the strong Black woman narrative (Springer, 2007). Springer (2007) argues that in the Black society, the strong Black woman narrative is an appreciation of the strength of Black womanhood. Rejecting the strong woman narrative therefore applies to White women rather than Black women (Springer, 2007). Such a narrative should not be presented as if universally applicable.

From this argument, it is clear that research in the post-feminism area has largely focused on analyzing media texts in which actors or participants are White women. While there is research that analyzes *white* chick lit films and television reality programs, there has been limited focus on Black chick films (Springer, 2007). The italics here are my own emphasis to highlight that the word 'white' is missing in the analysis by

scholars. It is as if an assumption is made that chick lit is white. This is no different from, for example, the language that is used to talk about beauty. A white woman is beautiful, whereas a Black woman is a 'black beauty'. White is therefore constructed as a standard of beauty, just like thinness with models. A model who is not thin is not simply a model, but a 'plus size model'.

There are Black chick lit films and in their representations of Black women, they work to construct how Black women should live their lives. These films such as *Diary of a Mad Black Woman*, *Waiting to Exhale*, and *Down in the Delta* construct a post-feminist message that Black women ought to understand their place within a gender and race hierarchy (Springer, 2007). The films construct Black women as lazy and indulgent if they choose to remain at home. Being outside of the home is in the Black society considered as appropriate and necessary conduct for a Black woman (Springer, 2007). Springer (2007) asks whether Blackness is constructed as connected to the world of work and whether the world of work outside the home is what represents freedom. In the Black chick film genre, Black women are deprived of the pedestal given to White women – the option to stay at home rather than work (Springer, 2007). The films reflect early White feminist thought when spaces outside the home were considered liberating compared to domestic spaces.

Post-feminism is also a process that "facilitates a broad-based, pluralistic conception of the application of feminism, and addresses the demands of marginalised, diasporic and colonised cultures for a non-hegemonic feminism capable of giving voice to local, indigenous and post-colonial feminisms" (Brooks, 1997, p. 4). That is, post-feminism acknowledges the non-universal applicability of feminisms to diverse groups of

women. This acknowledgement is important as there are scholars who have long advocated for different gender based theories. One such theory is Africana womanism, a theory that claims to place the African culture at the center of studying African women's lives, making it relevant for this study that is contextualized in South Africa.

Black feminism, Third World feminism and African feminism

There are at least three types of feminisms that could be considered relevant for this study. These are Black feminism, Third World feminism and African feminism. As a term, feminisms recognize that patriarchy is still a challenge and that women's worlds are highly differentiated making their experiences in different parts of the world dissimilar. Feminisms now generally acknowledge the need to contextualize the lived experiences of women from different geographies, racial backgrounds, classes and ethnicities. For example, Black feminism situates itself within the feminist movement but stresses the challenges faced by African-American women that are dissimilar from the lives of White women. Also, African feminism, which should not be confused with Black feminism, concerns itself with Black women within the African continent. Similarly, Mohanty, Russo and Torres (1991) in their book, *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* acknowledge the different geographic locations and histories of women in the world and note that these differences suggest that women from across the world face different contextual challenges.

According to Mohanty, Russo and Torres (1991), Third World feminism considers the "history of colonization and structural dominance between first and third world peoples" (p.x). The very use of the term 'third world' demonstrates the differences between the developed and developing world. Mohanty (1991) explains that 'third world'

as a phrase is a political choice to wrestle power away from those who 'other' and represent areas known as the third world using "frozen" descriptions (p.6). Mohanty (1991) also cautions that choosing to use 'third world' does not mean women in these areas are a "unitary group" (p.7). Rather, the term refers to women in different parts of the world who share "common struggles rather than color or racial identifications" (p.7). In reference to both Black and Third World feminisms there is an acknowledgement of the politics of concurrent difference and commonality that question the idea of a universal feminism.

African feminism would stand out as one form of feminism that would be relevant for this study since it is contextualized in the African continent. Let me deal with this type of feminism. Oyewùmí (2003) has claimed that if feminism represents women's agency then African women have long been feminists since "self-determination in the African societies was a value and a matter of course" (p.1). She therefore sees no need to even use African and feminism as these represent "tautology" (p.2). Yet, Oyewùmí (2003) also asks about the "implications for Africans of uncritically adopting western social categories, concerns and realities" (p.3). However, Nnaemeka (1998) had long argued that by adopting feminism, Africans were not uncritical. Nnaemeka (1998) goes further to outline seven ways in which African feminism "resists" 'western' feminism:

First, resistance is raised against radical feminism – African feminism is not radical feminism. Second, resistance is directed towards radical feminism's stridency against motherhood – African feminism neither demotes/abandons motherhood nor dismisses maternal politics as non-feminist or unfeministic politics. Third, the language of feministic

engagement in Africa (collaborate, negotiate, compromise) runs counter to the language of Western feministic scholarship and engagement (challenge, disrupt, deconstruct, blow apart etc.) – African feminism challenges through negotiation and compromise. Fourth, there is resistance to Western feminism’s inordinate and unrelenting emphasis on sexuality that conditions, for example, the nature, tone, spectacle and overall modus operandi of Western feministic insurgency against female circumcision in Africa and the Arab world. Fifth, there are disagreements between African feminism and Western feminism over priorities. The much bandied-about intersection of class, race, and sexual orientation in Western feminist discourse does not ring with the same urgency for most African women, for whom other basic issues of everyday life are intersecting in most oppressive ways. This is not to say that issues of race and class are not important to African women in the continent. Sixth, African feminism resists the exclusion of men from women’s issues; on the contrary, it invites men as partners in problem solving and social change. Finally, there is resistance to the universalization of Western notions and concepts (p.6-8).

This extended quote shows how feminism is articulated differently in the African context. The differences between the two feminisms relate to the different contexts in which they are applied rather than a rejection of the importance of gender issues. For instance, Kolawole (1997) states that African women see the fight for women’s rights as an important issue but reject the view that originates from “the West with the presumption

that this perception of women's issues is universal and relevant to all women globally" (p.8). In other words, African women resist assumptions about their lives and what should be important in African contexts.

The presumed universality of feminism has led to some African scholars being incorrectly described as feminists because of their writings. Such scholars include Buchi Emecheta. According to Mikell (1995) Emecheta refused the feminism label on the grounds that it is men bashing. Kalowole (1997) adds that Emecheta conceded that she would accept the feminism label with a "small f" (p.11). This means that there are elements within feminism with which she disagrees. In fact, Mikell (1995) also states that some African women are careful not to be seen as being co-opted into a 'western' ideology in which men are seen as the enemies of women. However, she adds that there were more African feminists in the 1990s than in the 1980s.

African feminist Bádéjo (1998), states that African women are different from European and Euro-American women since their cultures and beliefs are not the same. For this reason, African women's feminism must be connected to their cultural realities in which men and women mutually co-exist with women at the center of life. This view is connected to the African history in which women held positions of power and were not treated as inferior to men in pre-colonial times (Aidoo, 1998; Ndlovu, 2008; Romero, 2015). The issue of male/female mutual co-existence is well articulated by another African feminist, Filomina Steady (1987) who states:

For women, the male is not 'the Other' but part of the human same. Each gender constitutes the critical half that makes the human whole. Neither sex is totally complete in itself to constitute a unit by itself. Each has and

needs a complement despite the possession of unique features of its own. Sexual differences and similarities as well as sex roles enhance sexual autonomy and cooperation between women and men rather than promote polarization and fragmentation. (p.8)

The idea of mutual co-existence is repeated by most of the scholars referenced here.

For instance, Bádéjò (1998) also writes:

African feminism embraces femininity, beauty, power, serenity, inner harmony and the complex matrix of power. It demonstrates that power and femininity are intertwined rather than antithetical. African femininity complements African masculinity, and defends both with the ferocity of the lioness while simultaneously seeking male defense of both as critical, demonstrable, and mutually obligatory. (p.94)

Both scholars emphasize male/female relations in the African culture with women “seeking male defense” although women are themselves powerful. These scholars caution that their assertions should not be assumed as male/female subordinate roles but rather as an acknowledgment of the African belief in which some women accept that males have superior strength and are better positioned to fight enemies and to protect their families. Reinforcing the issue of positive male/female relations in the African context, a white South African feminist, Lockett (1996) states that African women “do not attack men instead they empower the Black man” (p.19). She further claims that in South Africa, White women, given periods of racial oppression are included in the “self” with White men while Black men are tied together in the “other” alongside Black women

(Lockett, 1996, p.17). Racial oppression made it clear to Black people that they should unite against the White enemy rather than against themselves.

Both African feminism and Africana womanism challenge 'western' feminisms and 'western' inspired ideologies. That is, in both groups the scholars argue for an appreciation of the African culture and highlight the differences between African and Western women and life experiences. Now, the shifts within feminism indicate that feminism continues to be contextualized and moves away from what was a White middle class Euro-American women's movement. These deconstructions and reconstructions of feminism have been seen as indicative of a new wave of feminisms, awareness that feminism is an ongoing discussion that is constantly evolving and gets broken down to cater for different identities (Brooks, 1997; McRobbie, 2009). Post-feminism scholars such as McRobbie (2009) also fit in here for her argument that feminism treated femininity as if it was a sin. The point is that feminism has been critiqued and different ideologies and concepts have emerged out of these various critiques. Africana womanism is one such concept that developed in response to shortcomings within feminism.

Reference to the three forms of feminism discussed above is intended to make clear that I am aware of their existence. However, this study considers Africana womanism as more relevant for this project. This is because theories used to guide research about [South] African women's lives must be sensitive to the interdependence between the women's histories, context and cultures. A mismatch could result in a misinterpretation of the nitty-gritty of everyday situations. Africana womanism is a concept that positions itself as being different on all accounts from feminisms. This is

because one of AW's primary concerns is challenging inequality that is enacted on the basis of race, first and foremost while also arguing for an appreciation of African cultural norms and practices.

Africana womanism: African beliefs about womanhood

Africana womanism emerged as both a response to feminism and as an alternative for Black women looking for an ideology separate from that of feminism. AW is suited to a study that examines weddings and African marriages in the South African Black culture. This is because this theory makes it explicit that in the African culture there are certain roles to which African women assent. Through AW, my aim is to examine how African womanhood is constructed in the Black South African culture in a country that embraces hegemonic neoliberalism and post-feminist principles.

Clenora Hudson-Weems, the originator of AW, is an African American professor of English at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Initially, Hudson-Weems argued for the term Black Womanism, which later evolved to Africana womanism in order that it can be inclusive (Hudson-Weems, 2004). Rephrasing Black to Africana is a recognition that Africans are both in Africa and in the diaspora (Hudson-Weems, 2004). AW is an "ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in our culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women" (Hudson-Weems, 2004, p.24). Zulu Sofola, African playwright and scholar, in her foreword to Hudson-Weems' *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1993) commends Hudson-Weems for challenging "Eurocentric" views while simultaneously advancing an "Afrocentric" perception and position (p.xvii). This is because Hudson-Weems asserts the importance of examining Africana women's

realities through African inspired theories that appreciate the African cultural complexities and experiences.

The ideology of AW is deeply connected to certain African cultural beliefs and practices. It places the African culture at the center of understanding African women's realities. Womanism is an "extension of woman" and refers to a human being rather than female, since female can also refer to plants and animals (Hudson-Weems, 2004, p.23). Woman is more appropriate than "female" of feminism (Hudson-Weems, 2004, p.23). From this explanation, a reader already begins to see the difference between AW and feminism – the geographic focus and the naming.

AW addresses three issues – race, class and gender, in that order. Let me deal with the issue of race and why race, according to Hudson-Weems, is more important than gender. During the apartheid era in South Africa, Black people were oppressed because of their race and not just because of gender (Hudson-Weems, 1993; 2004). In challenging feminism Kolawole (1997) asks whether "any shade of feminism can comprehend the intensity of such women's trauma or address their pressing need?" (p. 30). What should be understood is that Black women and men in South Africa fought together for "human dignity" (Mompathi, 1982, p.112). Emerging from these quotes is that for Black people, race rather than gender is a key organizing principle. In practical terms, and in the context of modern day South Africa, although some Black people have accumulated wealth, they still face discrimination on the basis of race. In South Africa, at least, there are "problems that stem from racial oppression" (Hudson-Weems, 2004,

p.39). Twenty-two years into democracy, there are white people in South Africa who still see Black people as no more than just “monkeys”⁵.

Concerning class, Hudson-Weems (1993; 2004) explains that Africana women and men still struggle for economic freedom and that compared to white people they are in low-level jobs. The same applies to South Africa where wealth still has a white face while the face of poverty is Black. The *City Press*, a South African Sunday newspaper reported in March 2015 that 69 percent of wealth in the country is still owned by white people⁶. Together, Indians, Blacks and Coloreds grapple with the remaining 31 percent⁷. Given the African continent’s history of Black oppression, Black people scramble for a few resources (Aina, 1998). This makes concerns for gender oppression less important than other urgent everyday matters. However, as Hudson-Weems admits improvements should be made in the area of women’s oppression (Hudson-Weems, 2004; Reed, 2001). In fact, Hudson-Weems also writes of the triple challenge facing Africana women given that they have to deal with three oppressions –race, class and sexism (Hudson-Weems, 1993; 2004). However, unlike in feminism, with AW, challenging patriarchy is not considered the most important issue as Africana womanists claim to be primarily concerned with race inequality about issues of gender.

Let us examine the features of AW especially because these relate to some African beliefs about African women, something key in this project. There are 18 features that are idiosyncratic to AW according to Hudson-Weems (1993; 2004). An

⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/07/south-africa-penny-sparrow-apartheid-nostalgia-racist>.

⁶ <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/SAs-super-wealthy-Who-they-are-where-they-live-and-what-they-do-20150429>.

⁷ In South Africa, Coloured people are people who are of a mixed race. About 8.9% of the South African population is made up of Coloured people according to the 2011 South African Census.

Africana womanist is: a self-namer, a self-definer, family-centered, genuine in sisterhood, strong, in concert with male in struggle, whole, authentic, a flexible role player, respected, recognized, spiritual, male compatible, respectful of elders, adaptable, ambitious, mothering and nurturing (Hudson-Weems, 1993; 2004; 2012). But, can a claim be made that Africana women have all these AW features? It seems unlikely. Yet, Hudson-Weems (2004) argues that Africana women have all of these 18 features albeit “to a varying degree” (p.55). Although she elaborates on these elements, one weakness is that she does not explain their foundation or why she believes that all Africana women possess these characteristics. Also, can there be more or less than 18 of these elements in one woman. In cases where an Africana woman does not have all these characteristics could such a woman identify as an Africana womanist? The vagueness that pervades Hudson-Weems explanations also extends to the use of the phrase ‘varying degree’. What is this degree, how does the variation work, and who constructs, defines and measures the degree?

Hudson-Weems’ argument about authenticity should be critically examined because with interactions that women have with other people within and outside the African culture and with changes and developments that women undergo can they really claim to be “authentic or genuine”? These are words used by Hudson-Weems (1993) to suggest that Africana women share “everything out of love” (p.63). Can women really share everything out of love? Also, can women of other races offer comfort out of love? Hudson-Weems’ (1993; 2004) argument is overstretched, perhaps to suggest the general communal nature of Africans. In addition, the questions posed

about the phrase 'varying degree' also apply here. Also, who defines authenticity, what is authentic and how is authenticity measured?

Let me briefly discuss a few of the 18 features of AW. In this brief discussion, on the one hand I combine self-namer and self-definer and on the other hand I discuss together family-centered, flexible role player, in concert with male in struggle and male compatible. Regarding self-naming and self-definition, Hudson-Weems (1993; 1998; 2004) explains that naming is important because it is through a name that something assumes a presence or can be defined. In other words, an Africana womanist must self-name in order to bring herself into existence (Hudson-Weems, 1993). This means that Africana women ought to name themselves rather than take on labels coined in their absence by White women. In making this argument, Hudson-Weems challenges Black women who identify with feminism, a movement in which Black women were not originally invited to participate. She also alleges that when a person aligns herself with a name, she also buys into its goals.

To self-name and to self-define is to self-empower. When one self-names she challenges the labels given by namers or definers or labelers. Hudson-Weems stresses a view shared by Toni Morrison that it is those who define or name something who hold the power. Indeed, Akbar (1984), a clinical psychologist who critiques Eurocentric methods and argues for Afrocentric approaches to practicing psychology where Black people are concerned had long asserted that "the uncritical acceptance of the assumptions of Western science by African people is to participate in our own domination and oppression" (p.395). The insistence on self-naming and self-definition is not only important for self-affirmation but it also wrestles power away from those who

have for a long time marginalized Black women through ugly labels (Gqola, 2001). While White women and various other groups of people considered to be the 'other' have been ridiculed through debasing names, here I only focus on Black women.

Efforts at self-naming and self-definition are thwarted by the persistent emulation of Europeans by Africans. Since the colonial period, Africans in Africa and later in the diaspora were discouraged from speaking African languages, while imitating Europe was encouraged including imitating Europe's material culture (Ani, 2000; Wa Thiong'o, 1994; Fanon, 1967). In imitating Europeans, Africans developed a sense of insecurity and inferiority further entrenched by the association of Africans with 'the devil' while Jesus was illustrated as a white man (Ani, 2000). To this day, in a majority of churches and in popular media, Jesus, just like Santa, is represented as a White man. Also, what evidence exists to suggest that the devil was a Black man? The race of either of these characters is less important than the implications of the everyday racial issues in which White people continue to be represented as superior to Black people. The point here is that there is urgency to remove the damaging African labels through self-naming and self-definition.

Drawing from the 18 features of AW, the second set of features that grouped together above because of similarity and also because of their relevance to this project are family-centered, flexible role player, in concert with male in struggle and male compatible. Hudson-Weems suggests that women are not concerned with having men as leaders in the home front, that gender roles are flexible and that women and men work together with the goal of fighting against racism. Most interesting, she adds that African women "accept traditional roles with women as child bearers and men as

protectors who are expected to uphold and defend women and children” (Hudson-Weems, 2004, p.64, 65). There is also the notion that in society “female subjugation is not the most critical issue” (Hudson-Weems, 2004, p.38). In addition, Hudson-Weems (2004) argues that African women do not really focus on themselves as individuals but that their focus is on “the family and its needs” (p.60). The way in which Hudson-Weems represents African women contradicts the neoliberal and post-feminist notions of individual rights, in particular. African women seem to actively embrace what feminists would see as a less than ideal or an inferior position in society. This suggests that a man is seen as and is expected to be *intloko* [a leader] or the head of the family who provides and protects. The idea of a woman as docile is similar to the point made by Dzobo (1975), that women are expected to be obedient to men and that those women who do not challenge men are preferred. The author makes this point without critiques.

AW has been included as part of the reading material in a number of U.S. universities particularly in African Studies departments. Also, a number of scholars have used AW as an overarching theory while some have selected from its 18 elements in their research. For instance, Muwati and Gambahaya (2012) use one characteristic of AW, ‘flexible role player’ in their study to challenge feminism’s views on gender and space. In their study, Muwati and Gambahaya (2012) argue that in the Ndebele and Shona cultures in Zimbabwe, space is not interpreted as “private female and public male” and that even as a private space, the home is not understood as an oppressive space for women (p.100). Similarly, Mararike (2012) uses the point of the centrality of family and writes about the significance of the kitchen in a Zimbabwean family, thus

explaining the conceptualization of the kitchen and its centrality to the vitality of life in Zimbabwe.

In the Africana Womanism reader, *Rediscoursing African Womanhood in the Search for Sustainable Renaissance*, different scholars apply Hudson-Weems' framework in a methodological analysis using its various features. In the foreword, the editors stress that the book "proffers a critical alternative based on the prioritization of family centrality and the role of the woman within the context of global family-hood and humanity" (p.xii). In the same reader, Mboti (2012) uses AW to examine the representation of Black women in two American films, *The Last King of Scotland* and *Blood Diamond*. He notes the stereotypical way in which African womanhood is represented in the films, arguing that African women are disgraced and represented as prostitutes. Thus, he emphasizes the need for self-definition, one of Hudson-Weems 18 characteristics.

In an article published in the *Western Journal of Black Studies*, Perellin (2012) also chooses one element, 'self-definer' in her study with Black women. In this study she sought to understand how Black women define themselves despite prevalent media images that demonize the Black woman. She asked women to take photographs that capture how they see themselves and how they wish to be perceived. Perellin (2012) through the photographs discovered that Black women define their lives very differently from the media portrayals. These examples show various ways in which AW has been used in research. More importantly, it is an Afrocentric framework interested in race empowerment. As a concept, AW highlights the importance of understanding the African culture, stresses co-operation between Africana men and women, while also

suggesting that women agree to certain 'traditional' roles unconcerned with individualistic notions.

Critiques of Africana womanism

This study predominantly draws from the notion that African women agree to certain traditional roles and that family and the community trump individual preoccupation. However, this section deals with the critique that AW 'essentializes feminism and the African culture'. Some of the scholars who have criticized AW for representing both the African culture and feminism as static are Alexander-Floyd and Simien (2006). First, I want to address the issue of the African culture. Moemeka (1989) emphasizes that there is such a thing as an African culture. He argues that Africans believe that the community is more important than the individual, believe in collective responsibility and co-operation, believe that people in positions of authority should be respected although they are not above community rules, and that older people ought to be treated with dignity and respect and what they say should be valued (p.4-8). These are common values and beliefs that different African ethnicities hold.

Moemeka (1989) also draws from Maquet (1972) who emphasizes that "Africanity is reflected in various aspects of culture such as marriage, family, lineage system, belief system, value orientation and world views" (p.3). In other words, there are elements of the African culture that are common across the span of African peoples in the continent. These aspects of the African culture make it difficult to dismiss the claim about the existence of an African culture. Asserting that an African culture exists is not incorrect, does not pretend that all beliefs and practices are uniform, does not suggest that African culture is static and is not an attempt to essentialize Africans or their

culture. Instead, it is an acknowledgement of the common African practices and beliefs revered by Africans.

To further refute the assertion by Alexander-Floyd and Simien (2006), Molefi Asante (2007), an Africana studies professor at Temple University has in various books and papers advocated for what he calls Afrocentricity. This is a view that African life ought to be interpreted from the standpoint of Africans. He argues that Africans should interpret their lives from their own perspectives rather than from the viewpoint of Europeans. Other scholars have similar views about the importance of understanding the African culture and the importance of studying African life with an understanding of the culture of Africans (Ani, 2000; Makaudze and Shoko, 2015; Dzobo, 1975). This does not suggest that studies of African life should be the exclusive preserve of Africans. Rather, as Africans aware of African beliefs, values and practices, these authors caution non-Africans to be aware of their standpoints and ideologies when attempting to study African life.

Also, Hudson-Weems is of African American descent. As such, she cannot claim to fully understand the dynamism of the African culture. This is especially important since there are differences between the conduct of African Americans and Africans in the African continent. This study acknowledges that Africana Womanism has limitations but is a relevant theory given its articulations about the importance of using African cultural perspectives to examine African life without relying on popular Eurocentric theories.

Weddings, hegemony, neoliberalism, post-feminism and Africana womanism

This chapter has emphasized that hegemony, neoliberalism, post-feminism and Africana womanism are relevant in this project in at least three ways. First, neoliberalism and post-feminism are closely related. As theories, both deal with the underlying capitalist notions prevalent in the conduct of the structures on the macro level in which we find wedding media and on the micro level where we find individuals. Second, both neoliberal and post-feminist principles on the one hand and Africana womanism on the other are useful in theorizing the negotiation between what it means to be an African woman in a post-colonial setting on the level of group identity. Yet, on the national level, South Africa is a post-colonial and post-apartheid nation that embraces neoliberal principles of individual identity and choice fostered through the concept of democracy. How do these dichotomies work themselves out on both the individual and group identity level? Third, hegemony as the overarching theory brings together the other three theories and provides a framework to examine the dominant ideology evidenced by the practices, imagery and language that have become commonsensical in the representations of and language used to talk about and do weddings.

Informed by these four theoretical frameworks, and against the background of *Our Perfect Wedding* and *Top Billing Weddings* – two South African wedding reality television programs analyzed in this dissertation, the following research questions will be examined:

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

To examine the texts selected for investigation this study uses Multi-Modal Critical Discourse Analysis [MCDA]. This section provides more information about MCDA including its history. Also included here is information about the different texts analyzed.

Multi-Modal Critical Discourse Analysis

MCDA developed from critical discourse analysis (CDA) following recognition that discourse is multi-modal and is not reducible to just words. For a long time scholars have been using CDA to investigate how ideologies function to structure society and call attention to social wrongs. Hence, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) state that CDA contributes to correcting social inequality. Therefore, CDA's main goal is social change (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 2003; Machin and Mayr, 2012). In other words, this methodological approach reveals how social power, domination and inequality are created and sustained in daily life (Van Dijk, 2008). This study examines social wrongs in media texts, speeches and conversations.

CDA owes its 1990s origin to a group of scholars who met at the University of Amsterdam to engage with theories and methods of CDA (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Such scholars' names: Theo van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak herself as well as Gunther Kress have become almost synonymous with CDA as they are not just predominantly cited in research that uses the CDA tradition but their analytical approaches have also become popular. These scholars are "the original critical

discourse analysis group” (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p.ix). This study largely draws from guidance of this CDA group.

The recognition that discourse is multi-modal led to the extension of CDA to MCDA. In other words, rather than analyze language, scholars also pay attention to visuals and the function visuals play in revealing ideologies. As such, researchers who use MCDA understand that meaning does not only emerge through language, instead there are other “semiotic modes” through which meaning is communicated and interpreted (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.6). However, the inclusion of other resources for analysis is still emerging since the focus has for a long time been placed on linguistic texts (Stocchetti and Kukkonen, 2011; Machin and Mayr, 2012; Van Leeuwen, 2008). Critical attention is being paid to images because of the recognition that images can be used to hide what words would make explicit or to distract readers from the words.

In this field the words language, discourse, power and ideology are predominant. But first let me explain the word ‘critical’. In this context, Van Dijk (2003) explains that ‘critical’ refers to the practice of critiquing interconnected social practices to bring to the forefront how language and power intersect to introduce and normalize certain ideologies. The term can also be traced back to the Frankfurt School and indexes the social, cultural and political construction of society (Van Dijk, 2003). Scholars influenced by the Frankfurt School are also generally known as critical scholars.

Discourse on the other hand refers to how language is used to represent social practice and whose perspective is dominant (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Discourse refers to how meaning is derived (Fairclough, 2010). “Discourse is language in the real

context of use” (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.20). This refers to how language is used in everyday contexts, at times functioning to hide oppressive views.

What is analyzed is how social institutions such as media organizations structure discourse and how discourse shapes institutions. Discourse is socially constitutive and socially conditioned (Wodak and Busch, 2004; Fairclough, 2000). This means that discourse influences and is influenced by social practice. Embedded in discourse are social actors, beliefs, conduct, contexts and the choices social actors make in the language they use to communicate (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). In practice, researchers can examine all of these aspects or choose those applicable to their research project. The different analysis chapters in this dissertation investigate all these discourse aspects.

Ideology refers to the ideas, beliefs and values of groups. Ideologies are depictions of certain facets of the world that help to construct and sustain relations of power and exploitation in society (Fairclough, 2003). Ideologies get entrenched over time, particularly when not challenged. In fact, dominant ideologies are inserted into language and made to appear normal or represented as though what is shown or communicated is the only way, that there are no alternatives. Van Dijk (2003) states that “discourse plays a fundamental role in the daily expression and reproduction of ideologies” (p.5) and “ideologies not only may control *what* we speak or write about, but also *how* we do so” (p.28). In other words, the things we say are evidence of our ideologies and ideologies influence the things we say.

Finally, there is the term ‘power’. Wodak and Busch (2004) explain power this way:

Language indexes power, expresses power, and is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power. Power does not derive from language, but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and long term (p.109).

By critically analyzing discourse, researchers reveal how language, power and ideology are connected and their function in society (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). These assertions correlate with Gramsci's notion of hegemony, particularly the idea that those dominant in society assert their power but those being dominated over can also challenge their dominance.

This study uses Machin and Mayr's (2012) MCDA strategy. This strategy is useful because the approach these researchers use combines lexical and iconographical analyses. Several scholars such as Van Dijk (2003), Van Leeuwen (2008) and Machin and Mayr (2012) explain that words are value laden. That is, there are reasons why one word is chosen over another – word choice or use is not neutral. When certain words are consistently used in certain contexts, researchers can ask why such words have become normalized in those contexts.

Lexical analysis also involves the examination of other linguistic features such as metaphors, pronouns, hyperbole, euphemisms and other figures of speech. This is because figures of speech are often used in the place of overtly saying something more directly. By using metaphors people re-contextualize speech and disguise what they actually want to say or what they really mean (Machin and Mayr, 2012). For instance, a metaphor can be used in the place of a "derogative" word (Van Dijk, 2003, p.78). However, CDA makes it possible to expose hidden beliefs buried in lexicon.

Regarding pronouns, Van Leeuwen (2008) and Van Dijk (2003) state that pronouns illustrate beliefs people have about their own groups and those they consider to be the 'other'. For instance, the pronouns 'them' and 'they' can be used to refer to an out-group/inferior whereas the in-group/dominant is referenced through 'we' and or 'us' (Van Dijk, 2003). When people use in-group designator pronouns they emphasize the groups' positive traits while outgroup designator pronouns are used to emphasize what is negative about a subordinated group. This strategy also includes de-emphasizing what is negative about the dominant group while de-emphasizing the positive traits of the subordinated group.

Beyond lexical analysis, iconographical analysis is also a strategy for visual analysis and part of the MCDA approach (Machin and Mayr, 2012). This type of analysis "explores the way that individual elements in images are able to signify discourses in ways that might not be obvious at an initial viewing" (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.31). This is like word use. Images are chosen and used in part because of values the images support or challenge (Stocchetti, 2011). This means that the reason behind choosing and using an image is never neutral or irrelevant. In turn, people exposed to the images internalize the beliefs and values communicated.

Iconographical analysis works on two levels. The first level asks what visuals denote. This refers to "who and or what is depicted" (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.49). This refers to the items or things shown in an image. On the second level images "connote" or communicate certain concepts or beliefs. The connotative role of images can be examined by exploring the "values communicated through what is represented, and through the way in which it is represented" (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.50). This

refers to the 'what' and the 'how'. The question to ask is: what is represented, how is it represented and what meanings do the representations suggest? Visuals are therefore analyzed for what they denote and connote.

By using iconographical analysis researchers evaluate visuals by focusing on the attributes, setting and salience and how these are used to communicate values (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Attributes refer to the features of the image and the values. For example, if the image is of a bride, researchers would consider how she is dressed, how the dress fits, how her hair looks, her shoes, and accessories. What do these attributes communicate about a bride? And, where text accompanies the image, what kind of language is used and does the language match with the image shown?

With setting the idea is to evaluate how the space is being used and what the space symbolizes. For instance, is the space empty or cluttered? In each case researchers would evaluate what the representation of the space suggests. In a wedding venue for instance, how do the attributes occupy the space, how is space shown, what is the size of the space, what meaning can be made about 'personal taste', 'glamor' and importantly what symbolizes 'wedding' about the space?

Salience on the other hand refers to what is made to appear prominently, to capture attention in ways that suggests certain values. There are a number of things to look for when examining the salience of images. These include color, tone, cultural symbols used, size, focus, and foregrounding versus 'backgrounding', what should be in the image but is missing, as well as what is emphasized versus what is de-emphasized. This also ties to what Van Leeuwen (2008) explains as the representation of class. He states that in general people of a higher social class and of a race that is considered

superior are shown to be powerful and represented as individuals with authority whereas people who are considered inferior are lumped into groups.

When using iconographical analysis researchers also pay attention to analyzing what is missing in the image when something else is present (Machin and Mayr, 2012) or what Van Leeuwen (2008) sees as foregrounding and backgrounding. These ideas about placement also relate to the representation of social action. In other words, what people are shown as doing which is also known as transitivity (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Transitivity looks at who is doing what to whom and the meanings communicated through such a representation.

The coding strategy for this study is based on lexical and iconographical analyses as just explained.

Coding and Analysis Strategy

Drawing from Machin and Mayr (2012) the data were examined and coded for the following:

Setting, salience and transitivity:

In order to conduct an in-depth analysis, focused was placed on the introduction of the couple to the audience, wedding day preparations, the wedding venue including interviews about the theme and activities in the space and the post-wedding interviews that couples conduct with the programs' presenters.

By focusing on these three features the study examined the features that are emphasized and those that are de-emphasized including the denotation and connotation illustrated through the representation of scenes, objects, social action and social actors. The questions asked repeatedly during the process of watching and

coding the episodes are: who is represented here, what is represented here, how are people and things represented, what are the people doing, what is happening in this space, what is the size of this space, what else is in this space, and what do each of these things mean and together what do they mean.

Lexical analysis

Through lexical analysis focus was on the words people choose when they talk about weddings and beliefs about wedding perfection and African woman-hood. I coded for the kinds of words used in the reality shows, the Facebook comments and the speeches. My aim was to examine the values and meanings associated with certain words and the underlying beliefs signified by using such words.

While Facebook comments are text based and do not need to be typed up, wedding speeches and the audio of the television shows were transcribed and used line-by-line coding (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995) was used. This type of coding ensured that I do not miss any of the words used. This coding strategy resulted in an in-depth analysis of the texts.

Data Analyzed

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, the data for this study are categorized into three sets. In total this study analyzed 46 individual texts. In the first set there are four episodes drawn from the two wedding reality television shows, *Our Perfect Wedding* and *Top Billing Weddings*. These are the only South African-produced wedding reality TV shows broadcast in the country. From each of these TV shows two

episodes were purposefully sampled. *Our Perfect Wedding* episodes average an hour in duration while those of *Top Billing Weddings* generally total about 10 minutes.

The second data set is made up of a total of 40 Facebook comments. The 40 comments are broken down as follows: 20 comments are drawn from the Facebook page of *Our Perfect Wedding* and another 20 from the *Top Billing Weddings* Facebook page. The comments are based on the four episodes analyzed in the first set. Chapter Six provides examples of and an analysis of these Facebook comments.

In the third category of data are two wedding speeches. Since Black people generally have two types of weddings, a white and a traditional wedding, the speeches are sampled from each of the wedding types. That is, the first speech analyzed was given at a white wedding ceremony while the second was given during a traditional wedding. These speeches were given at two separate weddings, which I attended in South Africa in December 2015. Chapter Seven of this document, which analyzes these two speeches, also samples from field notes to provide background to the analysis and to sketch out the relevant scenes from the weddings attended. In each of these speeches the speakers offer marriage advice to the couple.

Chapter Five of this research is based on an analysis of the two wedding reality TV shows. Below is more information about the shows, beginning with *Our Perfect Wedding*.

Our Perfect Wedding

On Monday, December 21, 2015, South Africans awoke to the news that the groom from the previous evening's episode of the popular wedding reality program, *Our*

Perfect Wedding had been “arrested for faking payment.”⁸ This and other stories provided details about how Wanda, the groom, had defrauded service providers and had left his bride desolate at the altar.⁹ In this episode which aired on Sunday, December 20, 2015, Ratanang, the bride, had cried on-set while Tumi, the presenter, searched for the groom with no luck. Although the wedding continued the following day, it was low-key and had none of the glamorous décor elements or scrumptious foods initially planned and shown in previous scenes.

Fast-forward to a different Sunday in the Spring¹⁰ of 2016 on September 25, when audiences are introduced to Godfrey, the groom and Aletta, the bride. The couple is planning their wedding. In back interviews Aletta speaks about how Godfrey had previously cheated on her and although the couple has children, the cheating made Aletta doubt their future together.

These two episodes are interesting because Wanda and Ratanang were already married, had been married for seven years, and also had children. Also, Godfrey and Aletta have children together. However, here both couples are planning their ‘perfect’ weddings. Both episodes offer an opportunity to examine the allure of white weddings. That is, what is it about the representation of white weddings that convinces couples of their necessity even when they are already married and have children? What lessons do we learn about the hegemonic construction and televisual representations of each of the two types of weddings? Analysis of these episodes, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five, reveals that the white wedding is constructed and represented as a

⁸ <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2015/12/21/Groom-from-Our-Perfect-Wedding-jailed-for-forging-payment>

⁹ <http://www.sundayworld.co.za/news/2015/12/20/our-perfect-wedding-groom-jailed> and <http://www.channel24.co.za/TV/News/our-perfect-wedding-groom-jailed-for-fraud-20151221>

¹⁰ Spring is in September in South Africa.

universal and necessary event while the traditional wedding is represented as if it has no real function.

Our Perfect Wedding is produced by ConnectTV¹¹ and debuted in South Africa in May 2013, on Mzansi Magic, a subscription television service that showcases South African inspired entertainment. Mzansi Magic is carried on Digital Satellite TV or DSTV. DSTV is the digital television component of the parent company known as Multichoice. Multichoice operates other brands including Gotv and M-net and other internet service providing companies such as MWEB.¹² *Our Perfect Wedding* predominantly features Black couples. At the time of writing this dissertation no white couples had been featured on the show.

For the period March 2017, the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa (BRC) ranked *Our Perfect Wedding* second in the top 20 prime time TV shows on DSTV. According to BRC¹³, *Our Perfect Wedding* attracted a viewership of 1, 567, 389. In comparison, for the same period, *Date My Family*, a dating reality TV program also produced by ConnectTV attracted fewer viewers - 1, 020, 880. *Date My Family* is also broadcast on Sundays before *Our Perfect Wedding* and on the same television channel.

While there is scant information about advertising and other revenue raked in by the wedding reality TV shows, ConnectChannel states on its website that the company has “produced television programs in excess of R150¹⁴ million for *M-net* channels.” This is about US \$11 million. ConnectChannel is ConnetTV’s parent company. The website does not contain a breakdown per television show. However, *Our Perfect Wedding* is

¹¹ ConnectTV is a production company owned by ConnectChannel.

¹² <https://www.multichoice.co.za/>

¹³ <http://www.brcsa.org.za/march-2017-top-tv-programs/>

¹⁴ <https://www.connect.tv/connect-channel>

mentioned as one of the “culturally relevant locally produced reality shows” along with five other programs that include *Date My Family*.

The ConnectTV website lists shareholders¹⁵ rather than sponsors. Also, credits included at the end of episodes no longer include information about sponsors. In 2015, *Our Perfect Wedding* lost two sponsorships, one from *Vodacom*¹⁶, a mobile network company and another from ABSA¹⁷ bank, following controversial episodes aired in December. In this episode, the groom proudly speaks of his predator skills when at 28 years of age he fooled around with young girls and courted his bride, then a 14-year-old girl. ConnectTV producers and owners were accused of promoting a rape culture, leading to the debacle with sponsors.

The format of *Our Perfect Wedding* is simple and routine. In each episode, a couple to be married, including family, friends, and service providers involved in the preparation of the celebrations are profiled at various stages of the planning and actual ceremonies. Each episode has the same structure, and an almost identical script. The final segment of each episode always involves the presenter asking the couple whether they think their wedding was perfect, to which they generally respond in the affirmative. Even Wanda, the groom who was arrested for faking payment and had caused his white wedding to be postponed, responded that their wedding was ‘perfect’. In each episode, couples have words of praise for their perfect wedding and also thank their families, friends and service providers, such as cake bakers and wedding day outfitters, for making their wedding ‘perfect’.

¹⁵ <https://www.connect.tv/connect-channel>

¹⁶ <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2015/12/06/vodacom-withdraws-our-perfect-wedding-sponsorship>

¹⁷ <http://www.destinyconnect.com/2015/12/01/absa-pulls-sponsorship-from-our-perfect-wedding/>

The second wedding reality program produced and broadcast in South Africa is *Top Billing Weddings*.

Top Billing Weddings

For years before debuting *Top Billing Weddings*, the flagship program *Top Billing* showcased expensive houses of celebrities and other wealthy people. *Top Billing* is produced by *Tswelopele Productions* and has been on air since 1996¹⁸ although the weddings insert came later. Other spin offs from *Top Billing* include a wedding magazine published annually. *Top Billing* is broadcast on Thursday evenings on SABC 3, the commercial channel of the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

In *Top Billing Weddings*, a couple is introduced to the audience while being interviewed about their initial meeting and plans for the wedding. The show also drops clues about the social status of the couple via voice overs and on screen sub-titles. In particular, the audience is shown the glamorous celebrity set-up of a wedding with inserts that include back interviews with wedding planners, caterers, wedding day outfitters, and attention to the design and thinking process behind the theme of the wedding. Also in interviews, the couple's friends, themselves celebrities, offer advice to the couple on marriage success while simultaneously commenting on the glamour of the wedding.

In this show, the wedding expenditure is made visible by the wedding elements such as the elaborateness of the dress, cost of the ring, design and size of the cake,

¹⁸ <http://www.topbilling.com/contact-us/tswelopele-productions.html>

venue, décor, entertainment, food and drinks, wedding paraphernalia such as programs on the table, the wedding theme, and table setting, including the center-pieces.

Consistent with the number of episodes sampled from *Our Perfect Wedding*, with *Top Billing Weddings* the same number of episodes are analyzed. The first episode features Criselda Kanada, the bride. The episode aired on June 18, 2015. Criselda is a radio presenter and known celebrity in South Africa. Her husband, a Prince and businessman, Siyolo Dudumashe, is less known. Criselda, in her 40s, had been married before and has three children from those relationships. She partly shot to fame as an HIV and AIDS activist, herself living with HIV. Criselda was abused by her first husband and infected with HIV by her third husband¹⁹. The episode analyzed here represents Criselda's fourth marriage.

The second episode analyzed features Siya, the bride and Akhona, the groom. This episode aired on December 11, 2014. Siya, introduced as a jewelry designer is less known while Akhona plays for the Springboks, South Africa's national rugby team. Akhona is one of the few Black players in a predominantly White team. As the couple is introduced to the audience through a voice-over, visuals prominently show Akhona wearing his rugby uniform.

Unlike Criselda and Siyolo and the two *Our Perfect Wedding* couples, Akhona and Siya do not have kids and were not already married. Also, in this episode, the known celebrity is the groom while the bride is less well known. The grooms in these two *Top Billing Weddings* episodes are of Xhosa ethnicity. However, Akhona has no known royal lineage as is the case with Siyolo, the other groom. As the analysis will

¹⁹ http://www.parent24.com/Teen_13-18/Development/care_nutrition/Parenting-with-Criselda-Kananda-20120607

demonstrate, ethnic lineage complicates the televisual representation of celebrity weddings.

Top Billing Weddings only features couples who are celebrities. This is one difference between participants in *Our Perfect Wedding* and those in *Top Billing Weddings*. In the analysis chapters, participants in *Top Billing Weddings* are referred to as the “celebrity couple” because they are regarded as celebrities in the country and are featured in a program that exclusively features celebrities and their lifestyles.

Our Perfect Wedding and *Top Billing Weddings* follow in the footsteps of popular U.S. and United Kingdom wedding reality TV programs. Examples of such programs include *Whose Wedding Is It Anyway?*, *Destination Weddings*, and *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings*. In these versions, also broadcast to South African audiences on DSTV, a pay per view channel, the focus is on planning a lavish white wedding.

This brings to mind the political economy of the locally produced shows. Research has shown that media tend to stick to uniformity and mimic success rather than deviate and risk losing audiences (Chavez, 2015; Deery, 2015). The goal to increase profits leads the media to reproduce what has worked elsewhere (Hunter, 2013). This reproduction of sameness negates cultural differences (Chavez, 2015). In fact, Chávez (2015) adds that the political economy of television results in homogenous representations of people across different cultures leading to “erasure” and “suppression” of difference (p.7-9). The production of sameness leaves very little, if any, space for diversity (Griffin, 2015). In the end these television programs “negatively impact” people (Chávez, 2015, p.13). Television producers concern themselves with money first and foremost and less with social justice.

Producers of reality television programs also “copy the format of successful European shows and frenetically scan U.S. channels for ideas about attention grabbing plot twists” (Oullette and Murray, 2004, p.1). It is not clear whether the two South African versions purchased the format, as is often the case in the production and distribution of copycat programming on TV globally, as attempts made since 2015 to interview the shows’ producers were unsuccessful.

It is therefore interesting to examine how the South African wedding reality television programs deal with the local culture of Black people in locally produced shows. This is especially important since the local versions emulate shows produced in the U.S. and the UK, where emphasis is on white weddings, whereas Black South Africans also celebrate a traditional wedding.

CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE ON WEDDINGS AND BELIEFS ABOUT AFRICAN MARRIAGE

This survey of existing studies represents research that has been conducted in the area of white weddings. This literature review is categorized into thematic areas that broadly deal with white weddings and consumerism, the history of the color 'white', and popular narratives in wedding media, specifically reality TV shows. The chapter concludes with a survey of literature that relates to beliefs about African marriage. The literature on African marriage helps to contextualize the present study's investigation into wedding speeches and their function in defining gender norms in marriage and society in general.

White Weddings

Weddings were not always about the bride. In the early period of weddings, in the U.S., these ceremonies were family occasions in which the planning and execution included the entire family. However, in the post Second World War period in the U.S., weddings began to be entrenched and legitimated as a "special day" in which the couple did as they pleased (Dunak, 2013, p.42). By the 1950's, beliefs about the wedding day being a family occasion would be further contested as brides and grooms worked to insert their own individuality, thus relegating the family to a secondary status (Dunak, 2013). This began the trend of the focus on the bride and groom, which changed by the 1960s as focus shifted to the bride (Dunak, 2013). By now focus on the bride has become hegemonic.

Weddings are seen as the day of the bride (Engstrom, 2012). In the foreword to their wedding industry book, Alers, Forster, Hill, and Ray (2001) write, “If ever there was time for self-expression, being true to yourself, and going for what you know, it’s on your wedding day” emphasizing the idea that the wedding day belongs to the bride. This narrative about the wedding being the day of the bride is reinforced by wedding experts who stress the notion that brides should act as the “stars in their wedding productions” (Dunak, 2013, p.48). This narrative is also noted by Wallace (2004) and Boden (2001). In fact, Boden (2001) argues that the media construct brides as ‘superbrides’ with wisdom (learned from the media) to manage the wedding planning. The notion of brides as wedding planners is one way in which women assert control and stay firmly in charge of the wedding (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). And, although couples claim to equally share in the responsibility of wedding planning, brides often do more than the grooms (Snizek, 2005). However, the portrayal of wedding day planning constructs the planning as something that is not “fun” as it requires a lot of work (Engstrom, 2012). Wedding reality programs such as *Say Yes to the Dress* also emphasize just how much work even shopping for a bridal gown is and how grooms are not involved in the process (Engstrom, 2012). For the engaged couple, wedding planning also entrenches gender roles.

Weddings and wedding planning function as spaces in which gender roles are reproduced (Fairchild, 2014; Otnes and Pleck, 2003; Bambacas, 2002). In media representations about wedding planning, this activity is portrayed as a “one-woman operation” (Engstrom, 2012, p.165). This issue of gender is consistent with what West and Zimmerman (1987) write in their seminal paper, termed “doing gender.” In the

paper these authors explain that gender is a daily performance. To West and Zimmerman (1987), “gender is routine” (p.125). Tasks such as shopping for a dress, searching for venues and looking for vendors are left to the brides, perhaps as the first step of training to be a wife (Wicoff, 2006). In other words, the bride runs the show (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). Brides take charge of the wedding day planning because brides are judged by their weddings, putting pressure on them to pull off perfect weddings (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). As such, weddings are constructed as a show put on for guests (Wicoff, 2006). In this performance, the beauty of the bride takes center stage and is commonly evoked by the wedding media and in discussions about weddings. Mupotsa (2015) in her study of wedding photographs of Black South African women also notes the focus on the bride. As illustrated by the studies surveyed here weddings are feminine spaces.

White is the color

It is becoming common for brides to wear colors other than white or colors closely approximating white such as ivory and off-white or cream. However, white is generally associated with weddings and is still the dominant color of bridal gowns. Queen Victoria, as far back as 1840, is popularly credited as the first woman to wear a white gown on her wedding day (Erlank, 2014; Engstrom, 2012; Ingraham, 1999; Otnes and Pleck, 2003). Before this period, it is believed that there was no specific color exclusively worn by brides. In fact, it was common for women to wear clothes in other colors including black (Engstrom, 2012). However, Monsarrat (1974) argues differently, and refers to an instance where a Jewish bride in 1646 wore white to her wedding. Nonetheless, the point is that unlike what is currently popular, with brides wearing white

bridal gowns, in the past such was not the case. After Queen Victoria's wedding, news and information about her bridal gown, cake and accessories were splashed in the media beginning the trend of showcasing weddings in the media (Engstrom, 2012). To this day, white is the popular bridal gown and deviations from the color still maintain a whitish appearance.

While white is commonly associated with brides in the context of weddings, it also functions to highlight the bride's sexual conduct. According to Erlank (2014), in the South African Black society as Black people began to participate in white weddings, the color of the dress indexed a bride's sexual status. White was for the exclusive use of brides who had no children while other colors were worn by women who were no longer considered "pure" (Erlank, 2014). On her wedding day a bride's status could be simultaneously celebrated and shamed. This means that while family and friends were happy for the bride, they were also aware of her sexual status given the color of her dress. Erlank (2014) also cites a 1935 meeting in South Africa in which preachers decided to allow women who were not virgins but had been in relationships with the men they were to marry to wear a white dress as long as they had not become pregnant. Interestingly, the white bridal gown was called the "last gown of virginity" (Wallace, 2004, p.100). Again, this connects the color white to purity.

Popular Wedding Narratives

Beyond the color of the gown there is a language that pervades weddings, which draws from a post-feminist notion of individuality and Disney-like fictional narratives. Weddings are seen as "brides' statement of personal style" (Wicoff, 2006, p. 152). The language used in relation to weddings, beyond focusing on individuality, also invokes

ideas of fairytales, princesses, beauty, magic and perfection (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). The narratives used combine “a dream nurtured since childhood” (Wicoff, 2006, p.156), princess fairytales (Otnes and Pleck, 2003; Wallace, 2004; Bambacas, 2002), and the notion of a fairytale held since a young age (Dunak, 2013; Alers, Forster, Hill, and Ray, 2001). Together with this language, women are portrayed as mature yet simultaneously childlike (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). The media teach women to act as blushing virgins in white bridal gowns yet to be mature enough to marry (Engstrom, 2012). These lessons about fairytales and beliefs about bride-hood begin from an early age as little girls are taught to imagine themselves as brides (Wicoff, 2006) and above all to look like princesses (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). This makes it harder for women to escape the bombardment resulting in internalized images about a bridal look (Engstrom, 2012). It is in these lessons and bridal representations that White women are epitomized as the standard of beauty.

Media Constructed Beauty Standards

The wedding media construct beauty from a narrow white feminine ideal. Bridal magazines emphasize whiteness (Ingraham, 1999). Beauty is emphasized as the most important element for brides (Engstrom, 2012). Brides copy the “media representations of femininity” (Boden, 2001, p.2). The type of femininity represented by media texts is lived in everyday life as women strive to look like the images they see (Thapan, 1995). The media also perpetuate a belief that if certain aspects of the body such as the hair or the face are left natural and unaltered that distorts the overall bridal look (Boden, 2001). In emphasizing narrow white beauty standards, bridal magazines “instruct women to

purchase items essential for their beauty” on the wedding day (Engstrom, 2012, p.92). Bridal beauty is connected to consumerism.

Influenced by the media, women engage in self-production in which they transform themselves for their own gratification but also for public adoration (Thapan, 1995). One key point here is that consistent with post-feminist scholars, Thapan (1995) also cautions that self-production for public adoration should not be seen as something that is done only for the male gaze. In contrast, being beautiful on one’s wedding day is seen as a gift to the groom and the guests (Wicoff, 2006). This is because women want the “enormous attention and the idea of being admired and photographed” (Wallace, 2004, p.278). Various explanations are used to cement the idea of bridal appearance production so brides can look other than themselves in daily life but the same as every other bride.

On this day, women, taking their cue from the media and others in their social networks, position themselves as objects of attention. In her book, *I Do But I Don't: Walking Down the Aisle Without Losing Your Mind*, Wicoff (2006) writes about her own desire that the groom and the guests enjoy looking at her, yet is simultaneously aware that the make-up and the gown made her look like someone else - a spectacle for the day. Beauty becomes a costume that enhances the performance displayed for the audience – a display of sexiness and being the envy of all (Wicoff, 2006). Otnes and Pleck (2003) refer to this as a bride being under the spotlight to be admired. In this display, the true self is hidden (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). In the logics of weddings, a constructed bridal look has been set for all brides to assimilate themselves.

In embracing the constructed beauty ideas, women are not passive participants; rather, women have internalized these ideologies as normal. The normalized beliefs about femininity and beauty also suggest that people are not always aware of the media's grip over their own self-representation strategies. In other words, the representations about femininity and beauty have been normalized as compulsory, leading women to participate in and perpetuate the same (Thapan, 1995). Women participate not as dupes but as active individuals with agency (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). Society values beauty and anything contrary to beauty is shunned (Wicoff, 2006). This is the hegemonic message to women in their daily lives and brides as they navigate the bridehood journey.

If a bride does not want to be shunned and wants to be a princess-like spectacle for the day, then she better put in the hard work required to achieve the set standard, which includes 'thinness'. In the period leading up to the wedding women engage in strict weight loss practices (Prichard and Tiggemann, 2009). Brides take extreme measures in order to fit into a dress (Wicoff, 2006). In the wedding television show, *Bridezillas*, focus is on achieving bridal and wedding perfection, something that is constructed as being as important as a "second job, regular job" (Engstrom, 2012, p.164, 165). *Buff Brides* is no different as brides work to achieve bridal perfection by trying to lose weight (Engstrom, 2012). Rather than purchase a dress that fits, brides discipline their bodies to fit a hegemonic bridal look. Brides squeeze themselves into ill-fitting gowns and end up "being uncomfortable for someone else's comfort" (Wicoff, 2006, p.159). The hard work that brides invest into achieving perfection is rewarded because when a bride believes that she is beautiful, she also feels a sense of

superiority (Wicoff, 2006; Otnes and Pleck, 2003). Discomfort and painful body work for the viewing pleasure of wedding guests are coupled and normalized as necessary.

The hegemonic message communicated is that weddings are for brides, brides are in charge, and they must be beautiful. This illustrates that to achieve the constructed beauty ideal and ensure a beautiful wedding, brides are encouraged to spend money. Consumerism is represented as assuring wedding perfection, and even when things go wrong, a purchase of goods can rebalance things (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). This is a message that is not critiqued in wedding representations.

White Weddings and Consumption

Weddings are big expenditure events with spending that does not seem to consider depressed economic activity. In the U.S. context the wedding industry is called “recession proof” bringing in about “\$80 billion each year’ (Ingraham, 2009, p.38, 41). This is money spent by couples either getting married for the first time, those remarrying, those renewing their vows and more recently same sex couples (Ingraham, 2009). This places money at the center of weddings.

There is a history to wedding consumerism. By the 1960s US Americans had become comfortable with the association of weddings with consumerism (Dunak, 2013). Dunak (2013) notes that “luxuries became necessities” and couples competed with others about whose wedding would be more lavish (p.48). This began the trend of considering wedding cost as a necessity (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). The primary purchase, which is also the most important in any wedding, is the bride’s gown, and while brides may agree to cut costs with certain aspects of the wedding, they do not go frugal on the purchase of the bridal gown (Ingraham, 2009). The media teach that to

achieve a perfect bridal look, brides must wear an expensive bridal gown (Engstrom, 2012). Repeated, these messages become commonsensical to brides.

Wedding costs are linked with romance and fantasy, tropes that advertisers consistently play on to naturalize the idea of cost necessity (Ingraham, 2009). Consumerism is presented as a way to avoid wedding imperfection (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). Brides are told that bridal perfection is unmatched by cost and that consumerism is a necessity (Wicoff, 2006; Otnes and Pleck, 2003). Wicoff (2006) adds that “advertisers tell us what we want” (p.220). For instance, make-up is advertised as something that is necessary, something that women want, and women in turn accept these constructed beliefs by participating in and conforming to the ritual so that they look like royalty (Wicoff, 2006). These representations of romance make it seem as if love is incomplete without money.

The hegemonic message is that brides must spend. But the money lavishly spent does not generally belong to the brides. In wedding media brides are not shown to be able to foot the bill, and instead they are portrayed as relying on men, either their husbands or their fathers, to finance their consumerism (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). Historically, with Roman brides, the lavishness of the bridal gown depended on the father of the bride’s wealth (Monsarrat, 1974). The dress was a way to visually display social class with Roman families (Monsarrat, 1974). This also means that what is displayed is the parent’s love for their child (Otnes and Pleck, 2003). This can also be seen as a consumerist public display of affection.

Ultimately, wedding media teach women to internalize beliefs about the white wedding and how to perform as a bride, a performance that is supported by

consumption. To achieve their wedding dream, these media teach women to be consumers, except that brides do not finance the consumption as grooms or brides pay for the bridal extravagance.

Although focus here is on studies conducted about wedding media, it must be emphasized that the wedding media do not function in a vacuum. In other words, the wedding media work within the larger media role of introducing and normalizing beauty standards rooted in a narrow feminine white ideal or consumption. Indeed, on a daily basis society is saturated by media messages that impose ideologies about beauty, femininity and consumerism.

Reality wedding shows have recently become integrated into the television scene in South African homes. In contrast, reality television programs have been a staple of the U.S. television scene for a number of years.

Reality Television Programs and Weddings

This section focuses on research conducted about reality television shows, including studies that have examined the function of wedding reality TV programs.

There is a wealth of literature on reality TV. As a genre of television, reality TV includes an expansive range of programs such as entertainment, drama, information and documentaries in which participants are “real people” (Hill, 2005, p.2) engaged in real life activities (Palmer, 2004). Scholars have noted that the programs are a mix of marketing, real life and entertainment (Murray and Ouellette, 2004). The broad and expansive nature of reality TV has made it hard for scholars to define what reality TV actually is (Bignell, 2005; Weber, 2015). However, there is consensus that reality

television is growing because it is cheap to produce (Hill, 2005; Bignell, 2005; Weber, 2015). The low production costs contribute to the proliferation of the shows.

According to Hill (2005) and Raphael (2004), reality TV emerged in the U.S. in the late 1980s to early 1990s and made its way to the UK in the 1990s. Also see Raphael (2004) who adds that reality TV programs emerged at a time of subdued financial prosperity with distributors looking for cheap programming (p.124). However, given its recent emergence in South Africa, there is scant literature on reality TV and its function in this post-colonial and post-apartheid setting. For this reason, while scholars know about reality TV and its functions, literature is concentrated in developed countries of the global north (European countries and North America) rather than emerging economies such as South Africa. For instance, whereas programs such as *Big Brother* aired in the late 1990s it was not until 2001 that South Africa had its first season of the same program but with local participants. By 2001 Germany was already in its second season (Bignell, 2005). By 2003, *Big Brother* would be broadcast across the African continent (Bignell, 2005). This represents a lag between the European and local versions.

Programmatically, reality television shows are easy to export (Hill, 2005). For example, following the success of shows such as *Big Brother*, *Survivor* and *Come Dine with Me* in the U.S. and the UK, these shows were exported to South Africa and reproduced with local participants. In fact, reality television shows “rely on original programs begun in one nation, which are repurposed to fit new markets or those that follow the same concept with slight modifications” (Weber, 2015, p.6). Either way, reality

TV programs tend to follow the same format (Bignell, 2005) and reinforce values about certain people and their identities (Weber, 2015).

Reality television programs rely on people who are for the most part not trained professional actors. Reality television is therefore represented as ordinary television because of the ordinariness of the people featured in the shows (Bonner, 2003). That is, the programs claim to represent real people and situations, a claim that sets reality television apart from fictional stories on television (Murray and Ouellette, 2004). The content of the shows is also represented as ordinary and focuses on everyday topics, which function to shape the audience's behavior (Bonner, 2003). By participating in reality shows ordinary people help to define what ordinary means.

The programs are a mix of marketing, real life and entertainment (Murray and Ouellette, 2004). For instance, Sender (2006) argues that the program, *Queens for a Day: Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* teaches society to accept neoliberal ideas of a consumer culture that are presented as upward economic mobility. Similarly, Bonner (2003) cites Hartley (1999) who argues that television teaches class belonging. This is similar to what Bonner (2003), Couldry (2004), and Murray and Ouellette (2004) consider to be people faking class belonging. Therefore, reality television programs instruct people on how to conduct or modify their lives.

These television programs teach rules about what the audience should do or how they should act in order to seem as though they belong to a particular class. This is what Fiske (1991) calls assuaging class differences - representing people as if they all belong to the same class, a higher class. People have a need to display their self-esteem and to achieve this they purchase goods and services that give them illusionary

belonging (Fiske, 1991). In her analysis of the wedding reality program, *The Knot* Engstrom (2008) found that the cost of the wedding and achieving wedding perfection through consumption is emphasized. Similarly, in another wedding reality show, *Say Yes to the Dress*, cost is explained as important to achieve bridal perfection (Engstrom, 2012). Citing Gans (1962), Fiske (1991) reasons that such a display of unreal wealth is performed by people who have no real social power but wish to construct meaning through a 'performative' act of consumption.

In these programs, the hosts mask consumption and represent it under the guise of giving advice or guidance as if to help viewers make informed purchase decisions. Spending money is presented as an informed choice (Fiske, 1991). Yet, what is actually promoted is conformity (Couldry, 2004). The representation of consumption in reality programs functions as a way to make people believe that they are in control of their lives and are making informed choices. In other words, consumption is presented as a choice and people are shown to be empowered enough to understand the choices they make.

This literature review suggests at least two things. First, brides consume and are consumed by wedding media. In other words, brides are attentive to the media lessons that teach consumption. This also means that without brides consuming wedding media, these media would either not exist or would not be as successful in shaping beliefs about weddings and in sustaining wedding businesses. Second, white weddings are detached from marriage. There is a neat separation between a wedding and a marriage. Studies examined here focus on various aspects of white weddings including the media's constructions of gender roles in pre-wedding preparations. However, this line of

argument is not expanded to include what happens beyond the wedding event and there is inattention to weddings that are not white. Yet, in the Black South African culture two wedding celebrations exist, and have separate roles, which include the traditional wedding's function as a symbolic transition into marriage.

The section below reviews research that deals with the social construction of and beliefs about African marriage. This is because of the absence of literature analyzing traditional weddings.

Beliefs about African Marriage

The introduction articulated that the traditional wedding in the Black society in South Africa is distinguishable from the white wedding in a variety of ways, such as the décor, clothes worn, and the themes of some of the speeches made. Also explained is that the traditional wedding is generally hosted at the groom's home, which symbolizes the bride's final destination. Within the amaXhosa speaking people in the Black society in South Africa, traditional weddings are sometimes called *ukwamkelwa kukamakoti*, which directly translates to 'the welcoming of a newly married woman'. Whereas a bride while in a bridal gown at a church or white wedding ceremony is referred to as *umtshakazi* [bride] once out of these clothes, and in the ethnic inspired clothes, *umtshakazi* becomes *umakoti* [newly married woman]. However, these words are also used interchangeably to mean a newly married woman.

At some point on the day of the traditional ceremony, *umakoti* changes out of her traditional wedding clothes to a different set of clothes. These clothes visually communicate a married woman's new life phase. This change of clothes often happens during that part of the *iziyalo* [marriage advice] in which elderly women, mostly married

women communicate beliefs about marriage sustenance, and proper conduct expected from a married woman. Men are not often part of the *iziyalo* activity although I have attended ceremonies where the husband was also advised on appropriate husband conduct. This should not be confused with the speech made at the traditional wedding ceremony and included in the program (the speech analyzed here). It is also during *iziyalo* that *umakoti* is given a new first name. In other words, there are at least three ritualistic activities idiosyncratic of traditional weddings, which are not included in the formal program and may exclude wedding guests who are not close family members of the couple. These are a newly married woman's change of clothes, the woman being named, and *iziyalo*, which functions as marital advice given to the couple, particularly the woman.

While the functions of each of these fall outside the scope of this study, it is important to note that without these three things a woman is not considered fully married in the Black society in South Africa. In other words, while the bride and groom exchange vows and rings and sign a certificate in which the bride officially uses her new last name for the first time, these actions are incomplete and do not function to symbolically transition the couple into recognized husband and wife. Why is an appropriate question to ask and the answer is found in beliefs about African marriage. For, how can a man become a husband and how can a woman become a wife without guidance? From where and at what point does this guidance begin and what does it entail?

Marriage behavior is actively and passively taught. In the African culture responsibilities and marriage behavior is learned by observing elders (Emecheta, 1989;

Musharhamina, 1985; and Dzobo, 1975). Girls learn from their mothers, roles they will be expected to perform later in their lives once married. Also, parents take care to teach girls how to take care of visitors, how to cook and keep a warm home early in their lives. This is the measure young wives will be judged with when married (Dzobo, 1975). Boys on the other hand are taught hard work by their fathers (Dzobo, 1975). The foundation for a moral marriage is laid during the formative years in people's lives. This training is ongoing and is heightened at puberty.

Cultural communication follows a top-down approach. Bafo (1989) argues that observation and oral communication are ways in which culture is learned with elders passing on knowledge about values, beliefs and traditions to the younger generation (Bafo, 1989). In return the youth have to nod in agreement to what elders say (non-verbal communication), learning from the wisdom of the elders in silence. Cultural knowledge is transmitted through interpersonal means often when family or groups of people gather together. Communication follows established social norms of the community (Bafo, 1989). In such teachings, it is stressed that African marriage is about pro-creation, rather than the right to have sex (Kirwen, 2005). The key communication message rests on expanding lineage above everything else, including sexual pleasure.

The African culture also teaches about conformity to values about marriages and what society expects (Dzobo, 1975). This is because Africans believe in group life, societal practices and the importance of harmonious community relations including the importance of the community above the individual (Dzobo, 1975; Moemeka, 1989). This should not be read to mean that all Africans are taught the same lessons and that all

conform to the rules. However, the point here is that there are certain hegemonic practices and beliefs that occur in African cultures.

The section dealing with white weddings also notes that scholars have observed that weddings structure gender roles. This structuring of gender roles is also part of African beliefs about marital roles, which according to Dzobo (1975) are clearly defined. In the marriage institution women are expected to “obey and humble themselves to their husbands” (Dzobo, 1975, p.19). From an early age girls are taught not to argue, while boys are taught not to hit their wives and to be diligent so as to help build families (Dzobo, 1975). Peaceful, kind and loving women are sought after, while disobedience can end a marriage. Women who challenge their husbands and group norms are shunned.

The demarcation of gender roles also functions to define how each spouse ought to behave. Dzobo (1975) notes that “behavior in marriage is regulated by knowing who a man is and who a woman is” (p.48). Both men and women are taught about proper marriage conduct, which for women includes regarding the husband as Lord and Master and never undermining a man’s sexual prowess, for if a man loses his sexual prowess he becomes a ‘woman’. The woman’s job is to “maintain a man’s virility” and to respect him (Dzobo, 1975, p.46). In addition, women are taught to cook, feed and ensure their husband’s cleanliness (Dzobo, 1975, p.46).

Most feminists are likely to find fault with these beliefs and practices and might view such practices as entrenching an unfair treatment of women. It is important to note that in South Africa, the *Constitution* adopted in the early years of democracy assures gender equality. This project, as part of its goals will examine what the language of

wedding television programs and featured speakers at weddings, both white and traditional, reveal about ideologies in relation to the neoliberal and post-feminist notions of individuality and empowerment and beliefs about marriage in contemporary South Africa.

This entire section on literature examination demonstrates a number of things, including that weddings whether white or traditional (extended to African marriage beliefs) are guided by rules. This section also illustrates that literature about weddings predominantly focuses on the white wedding. Within this white wedding literature, research has focused on brides, consumption, beauty and the functions of the wedding media in constructing a wedding and bride-hood.

This section has also provided an overview of scholarly works that examines the media's construction and representation of white weddings. To set the tone about traditional weddings and wedding speeches, which are other texts analyzed in this project, this section also discussed scholarly works that focuses on beliefs about African marriage. It has shown that beliefs about marital relations draw upon gender differences and structured roles and appear to negate notions of gender equality in contemporary South Africa.

This literature including gaps identified contribute to some of the questions this study explores specifically about the representation of weddings and marriage beliefs. For example, research about African marriage demonstrates that male prowess is protected at the expense of African women. The question then is how such beliefs function in contemporary spaces such as South Africa. Correspondingly, how do beliefs about African marriage interact with the narratives of neoliberalism and post-feminism?

These are some of the questions that this foregoing literature review will help to navigate.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do wedding reality television programs in South Africa represent white and ethnic weddings and what do the representations reveal about class and culture in the Black South African society?
2. How do audiences of the wedding reality TV shows in South Africa interpret the representations of weddings and what does that reveal about the meaning of Blackness in present day South Africa?
3. How does language in wedding speeches construct African womanhood in contemporary South Africa?

The purpose of these three questions is to examine how Black people navigate their identity in contemporary South Africa while confronted with divergent perspectives competing to shape the Black identity.

CHAPTER 5

THE DISCOURSE AND REPRESENTATION OF WEDDINGS IN TELEVISION

REALITY PROGRAMS

This chapter examines how a sample of wedding television reality programs from *Our Perfect Wedding* and *Top Billing Weddings* represent weddings and brides. *Our Perfect Wedding* and *Top Billing Weddings* are the only two wedding television reality programs broadcast in South Africa. *Our Perfect Wedding* debuted in South Africa in May 2013, on *Mzansi Magic*, a paid for subscription network that showcases South African inspired entertainment. The first of the two episodes analyzed aired on Sunday, December 20, 2015 and features Ratanang and Wanda. broadcast on Sunday, September 25, 2016 with Godfrey and Aletta as the participants.

Top Billing Weddings is an insert in the popular *Top Billing* show, a lifestyle program mainly featuring the lives of South African celebrities and glamorous houses. *Top Billing Weddings* features weddings of celebrities and is broadcast on South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), a public broadcasting platform on Thursdays. The first episode analyzed aired on Thursday, June 18, 2015 and features Criselda and Siyolo. The celebrity couple in the second episode is Siya and Akhona. The episode was broadcast on Thursday, December 11, 2014. Both episodes are available on *YouTube*.

The chapter is organized into four parts arranged from parts one through four in this way: Part one deals with how wedding television programs appropriate participants' stories in order to construct and represent white weddings as a climax of the couples' journey and therefore achievements worthy of lavish white weddings. Tied to this is the

representation of white weddings as universal and necessary with white bridal gowns portrayed as having magical powers that transform women to mothers, a new phase of life. Part two of this chapter takes a closer look at the representation of traditional/ethnic weddings highlighting that these events are portrayed as if useless and inferior to white weddings. Part three examines a constructed bridal look that makes it seem as if 'natural' Black hair is ugly and un-bride like, a representation that is underpinned by consumerism. Part four elaborates on how wedding television shows use space to index the social class of participants as they plan their lavish white weddings.

The chapter concludes with a summary that lays out the key findings discussed about the construction and representation of white weddings as socially desirable events while relegating ethnic weddings to the periphery. Such representation is consistent with reality TV weddings programs such as *Whose Wedding Is It Anyway*, *Destination Weddings*, and *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings*, programs produced in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. In these shows focus is on the ensuring of a glamorous white wedding. Overall, this chapter will demonstrate that the TV programs' coherence to the popular U.S. and UK programs fulfills the political economy of television in which sameness is reproduced while difference is ignored. In this type of representation, African cultural practices and looks are made to seem inferior and dispensable to the very people whose practices are splashed across television screens.

The investigation is based on lexical analysis, specifically word choice, and an iconographical analysis focusing on salience, setting and transitivity. To restate, salience refers to what is made to appear prominently while with transitivity the focus is on what people are shown doing (action or non-action). Setting on the other hand refers

to the use and function of space. By focusing on these three elements this study examined the features that are emphasized and those that are de-emphasized to determine how white weddings and White looks are represented as hierarchically supreme compared to ethnic weddings and Black looks, while white bridal gowns are represented as having magical functions and therefore necessary.

While this analysis is largely based on an in-depth examination of four episodes, two from each television program, with additional examples drawn from the archives of both TV shows, the episodes are emblematic of the discourse and representation of weddings in both shows. As such, this chapter proceeds with an understanding that reality TV programs are a genre with a generic and repetitive format.

White Weddings: Achievement, Magic, and Lavish Celebrations

A chance encounter while out running errands on a February morning in 2006 has steered Wanda, the groom and Ratanang, the bride to a life together and planning their wedding. The couple is now featured in an episode of *Our Perfect Wedding* in December 2015 seated on a bright red two seater couch or love seat narrating the story of their first meeting.

As they tell their story the audience learns that the couple met when they were still young, with Ratanang in high school and Wanda a second year university student. Ratanang was still in her pajamas and out buying baby formula for her niece. With no cellphones and with Wanda reluctant to start dating he nevertheless made a run back to his home to find a pen and paper so he could write down Ratanang's contact details. They departed with promises that Wanda would call and would take Ratanang on a date on February 16. This prompts Ratanang to disappoint her friends by cancelling their

plans only to be “**disappointed**” by Wanda who would only call two weeks later. By the time Wanda resurfaced, Ratanang was the “**laughing stock**” in her family. Later, they would secretly get married without their families’ knowledge. Wanda says Ratanang is very loving and has stuck by him “**through the tests.**” Now with two children, the couple, beaming with smiles, is planning their big white wedding.

The discourse is structured such that participants talk about the history of their relationships, and specifically, their hardships. For instance, just like Ratanang talks about “**tests**”, Busi, another bride in an episode of *Our Perfect Wedding*, talks about “**the challenges that happened inside the relationship.**” Similarly, in an episode of *Top Billing Weddings*, the groom Akhona says:

We’ve been together for so long and it was lovely to have the family and close friends here today **to share this special day with us.** Just to experience **what we’ve been through** and for us to tell them as well, thank you for supporting us through this **whole nine years of our ups and downs but finally we made it.**

Words participants use include “**through the tests,**” “**disappointments,**” “**challenges,**” “**ups and downs,**” “**what we’ve been through,**” and “**finally we made it.**” The words function to frame the white wedding as something that the couple deserves and has achieved. The ideological framework of the wedding as something that is deserved rests on the appropriation of the couple’s relationship stories.

The word choices communicate the idea that relationship journeys are difficult. For instance, Akhona mentions “**nine years**” to signal that the journey has not only been difficult but long. The voice over narrator adds that the in the nine years the couple

had **“two years of long distance dating.”** For these reasons, they have achieved something that must be celebrated. In fact, in this same episode, the voice over narrator says, “Siya and Akhona are living proof that slow and steady can **“win the race.”** The words “win the race” further function to cultivate the idea of lavish weddings as an apex of a journey and achievement. At the end of a race athletes generally celebrate. The narrator’s words evoke a similar imagery about relationships and weddings. Celebrating after winning the race is therefore made to appear similar to having a lavish celebration after a long relationship “race.” The words create a clichéd fairytale apex of the journey of love.

As the episodes unfold couples build on stories told earlier. For instance, during the white wedding ceremony, as groom Godfrey makes his speech, he thanks his bride Aletta saying, “thank you my love for **standing by me through the most difficult times.**” Earlier, the audience had learned that Godfrey had cheated on Aletta making Aletta doubt that their relationship would survive. The audience learns this in the scene where Aletta fits the white bridal gown, something that prompts her to cry, emotions that also lead her sister to tears. Through tears, which later morph into a broad smile, Aletta sniffles as she looks up toward the ceiling away from the camera as if nervous and says, “**I don’t believe it. With Godfrey having cheated on me. I didn’t think we’d get here today.**” The bride’s sister, also teary eyed, says, “**I am thankful. After-all that you’ve gone through, you’ve made me proud today.**” The bride’s mother also chirps in saying, “**you’ve persevered through it all.**” These words emphasize the bride’s ‘painful’ journey and work within the stories as an invitation to the audience to reflect

upon the journey and hopefully agree that the couple really deserves this lavish white wedding as a day of happiness.

Let me bring in something else Aletta's mother says in the same scene of tears. Aletta's mother says, "**Today you're in a white wedding dress. You're a mother now.**" Here the analysis focuses on what the white dress and motherhood symbolize without evaluating which should come first but reflecting instead on what appears to be the function of the white dress in this example. Aletta and Godfrey already have children. In general it is when a woman bears a child that she 'becomes' a mother although a woman who helps to raise a child is also known as a mother. What is interesting in this example is that the bride's mother adds the word 'now' as if the white wedding dress has transformed Aletta into a mother. The mother's word choice is tied up in what scholars have called the 'fantasy', 'fairytales', and 'magic' of white weddings (see Otnes and Pleck, 2003). This means the language used to talk about white weddings draws from storybook themes or Disney-like tales (Otnes and Pleck, 2003; Wallace, 2004; Bambacas, 2002). We find a similar fantasy theme here of a white bridal gown transforming a woman into a mother.

We find a similar language of reproducing hegemonic wedding media narratives in the *Top Billing Weddings* episode featuring Criselda the bride and Siyolo the groom. Note how Criselda speaks about her dress and her wedding during a conversation with Liezel, the presenter.

Liezel: What is the story behind this dress?

Criselda: Well! Fred²⁰ talks about a combination of being African and understanding the **elegant woman** that Criselda is. I guess that was his interpretation. All I said was I just want to **look like a Princess**. And I am really appreciative of it. It looks **beautiful**.

After the ceremony Liezel asks: Criselda did you get your **fairytale wedding**?

Criselda: I think I can write a book about just the wedding...what more can **a girl** ask for. This was indeed **our perfect wedding**.

Both the bride and the presenter repeat the wedding media's language of elegance", "fairytale", "Princesses," and "girls, " words that" are symbolic of the Cinderella type of romantic narrative. In this context, this romantic narrative could imply that the groom is the Prince rescuing Criselda from her past misery in the form of previous failed marriages as I explained in the introduction to this project. Co-incidentally, Siyolo, is a son of a Chief, which makes him a Prince.

The word "**girl**" symbolizes a very young woman and contradicts "**elegant woman**," the other phrase Criselda uses, which represents a mature woman. Elegance is not a word generally used to describe little girls. Yet, Criselda represents herself as both a girl and a woman. Otnes and Pleck (2003) have stated that the media teach women to act as blushing virgins in white bridal gowns. Interestingly, the same women are also represented as mature enough to marry (Engstrom, 2012). What we find here is a choice of words that relies on the hegemonic discourse of wedding shows, which teach brides socially acceptable bridal performance in which brides rather than be in

²⁰ Fred is the designer who made Criselda's bridal gown.

one stable representation of either girlhood or bride hood oscillate between immaturity and maturity.

Also evident here is the 'power of white' as represented by the gown and wedding. Readers are to remember that three of four couples whose weddings are referenced were already married when they had their white weddings. These couples are Criselda and Siyolo; Aletta and Godfrey; and Ratanang and Wanda. To demonstrate the point about the power of 'white', let's examine an example from *Our Perfect Wedding*, specifically the episode showcasing Aletta and Godfrey. Anele, the presenter says, "This couple **has shown us the power of forgiveness, the power of healing**. Thank you for **having us here to witness this journey with you.**" What we see here is an emphasis on the painful past from which the couple is moving beyond in their journey. Indeed, Aletta admits to having had doubts that their relationship would survive or in her own words, "**I didn't think we'd get here today.**" The white bridal gown simultaneously serves as climax of her journey with Godfrey and a bride's moment to let go of pent-up pain. The white bridal gown is constructed as melting away all the pain she has endured (See Erlank, 2014 and Wallace, 2004 for discussion on the function of the white bridal gown). The white bridal gown and the white wedding are made to seem to be important and necessary visual and symbolic public demonstrations of forgiveness and healing. The representations make it seem as if forgiveness and healing would not have been fully materialized or would have been unreal if not publicly performed through a white wedding.

The mystical power of white therefore cleans dirt and helps couples start 'anew.' The word 'dirt' is used here to intentionally relate it to the notion of airing dirty laundry,

given that Aletta has practically aired their 'dirty laundry' on broadcast television. To air laundry is to hang it outside in the eyes of the public. However, airing the dirty laundry is okay because the white dress and white wedding have justified why the dirty laundry had to be aired. The power of white has made things acceptable and has demonstrated the power of forgiveness and healing in the couple's journey. It is through these white elements, specifically the dress and wedding that forgiveness and healing is performed.

Ratanang and Wanda's white wedding is also constructed as a way for the couple to do right by the families since they had gotten married without their families' knowledge. For example, when asked about the number of guests Ratanang responds, "I was planning something small for 80 people but now I am sitting at 120. We have been waiting for this day for seven years and *ndibarobhile* [I robbed them] shame. Let us be." By not having had a white wedding, Ratanang is represented as feeling as though she had robbed her family. In the same scene, Ratanang's mother-in-law says she has "**been waiting for this day for a long time**" while Ratanang's mother also admits to being "**happy that the day has finally come.**" The white wedding is constructed as something that people eagerly await perhaps to appease their families. White weddings therefore function to get couples and families over past disappointments. In other words, through the white wedding families can be appeased. Even in their final interview with Tumi, the *Our Perfect Wedding* presenter, in which she asks the couple how they feel Wanda the groom responds, "It's been quite a **rollercoaster ride**. But, we're really happy that **finally it has happened.**" These words indicate the relief at finally appeasing the families.

We have already seen that the power of white also functions to migrate a couple to a new phase of life. In a back interview, Aletta talks about being thankful that they have “**started a new path.**” Also, in the *Top Billing Weddings* episode featuring Criselda and Siyolo, Liezel, the presenter, refers to “Criselda’s **new journey.**” In the same episode, during post-white wedding interviews, a guest introduced via sub-titles as Mr Mthembu also talks of a “**good beginning.**” Too, Siyolo, the groom says “**finally we are together as one**” yet, the still photographs shown earlier in the episode as b-roll material tell us that the couple is already married. These couples, including Ratanang and Wanda, were already married but it is clear that what symbolizes ‘being together’ or moving on to the next phase is not the marriage itself nor is it having children or *ilobola* [exchange of bride-wealth] or even the ethnic wedding. Indeed, these shows construct the white wedding as a marker of a new phase of life warranting extravagant celebrations.

The words “**journey**” and “**deserved**” included in the narrative of the programs also directly demonstrate that a white wedding is a culmination of a journey which warrants celebration. For instance, Tumi, the *Our Perfect Wedding* presenter in the episode featuring Ratanang and Wanda, talks about the couple “throwing the family the wedding they **deserve.**” This is because the couple had eloped, an act that angered their families, something the audience learns through back interviews. The white wedding is therefore not just an event but one that is deserved by the couple and their families. The word “**deserve**” used in these programs construct weddings as something of an accomplishment that merits a celebration.

The word “**journey**” on the other hand is mentioned at least three times in the 10 minutes episode of *Top Billing Weddings* featuring Criselda and Siyolo. In an interview with Thando, Liezel, the presenter asks Thando, Criselda’s daughter, what she thinks of the wedding given her mother’s “**journey**.” In the same episode, during post-white wedding interviews, a guest interviewed says, “Life is a **journey**. I think they have already started the **journey**.” This implies that the couple’s journey began before the white wedding and that the journey will continue as that is part of life.

Through the word choice of these programs white weddings are constructed and represented as a zenith of the journey of hardships. In addition, since the wedding is an embodiment of the couple’s journey, no cost should be spared perhaps even to wash away the past hardship. Through appropriating the participants’ stories and through word choice, the television shows ensure that the construction of lavish weddings as achievements is represented as commonsensical and entrenches a stable ideology featuring a neoliberal approach to weddings, an approach underpinned by consumerism.

The storyline is thus clear: a couple deserves a lavish wedding because they have achieved it. The wedding day is constructed as a site for the public display of a journey in which couples act as neoliberal subjects. This construction has clearly become socially endorsed as episode after episode couples talk about their journeys as they plan an elaborate wedding. Whereas a wedding is not a necessary event and can be skipped, to create audience hype and to justify the white wedding and associated expenditure, the representational mode of wedding reality programs make it seem that lavish weddings are necessary to migrate the couple to a new phase of life.

As a genre, reality TV is repetitive making it easy for audiences to know the sequencing, which begins by revealing the love journey to keep audiences from channel hopping. The repetitiveness also ensures that audiences can look forward to a wedding that justifies the love journey. The sameness of the program format is intended to maximize profits while minimizing losses by producing similar programs and ignoring cultural differences (Chávez, 2015). In addition, the format is known by audiences and likely functions to draw viewers to the shows and to keep viewership numbers on an upward trajectory.

The notion of a wedding as a site of lavishness also comes via the names chosen for the programs, *Our **Perfect** Wedding* and ***Top Billing** Weddings*. The words suggest that these are not just any other weddings or wedding television programs but they showcase “perfect” and “top billing” weddings. The word perfect is not defined but the programs themselves suggest that wedding perfection is made possible by spending lots of money. Likewise, something that is “top” is above all else while “billing” evokes the idea of an invoice, a bill or a check in U.S. American terminology. When used together, “top” and “billing” imply a check for a large amount of money resulting from purchasing something expensive. Through their names, the programs illustrate a language that binds together weddings as high spending events.

The construction of the wedding as an achievement does not begin when couples talk about the wedding, it starts earlier. An engagement as a precursor to a wedding embeds a ‘congratulatory’ language. ‘Congratulations’ has become a hegemonic response to a couple announcing their engagement. As a word, ‘congratulations’ expresses good wishes particularly for an achievement. This type of

language is carried forward to a wedding such that moments after tying the knot, a married couple is also congratulated. For example, in the *Our Perfect Wedding* episode featuring Ratanang and Wanda, Tumi, the presenter says, “Mr and Mrs Mahobo, **congratulations.**” Also, a guest at Siya and Akhona’s wedding says, “**well done** to Akhona for choosing a lovely wife.” These words also frame the wedding as something of an achievement for which the couple labored.

The analysis here points to two interacting elements. The first is that a couple’s relationship journey is appropriated and used to justify a lavish white wedding. Second, the lavish white wedding is tied up with the white bridal gown which has its own separate functions that add to the overall strategy of representing white weddings as attractive and necessary. Whereas white weddings are constructed and represented to have important functions, the same is not true for the representational mode of traditional weddings as discussed below.

The Representation of Traditional Weddings as Inferior

“X *‘endibona ndinje angalila, angalila...hililili!*” [If she were to see me looking like this, she’d cry...(ululations follow, represented by the word *hililili!*). This song is sung by wedding attendees at Ratanang and Wanda’s traditional wedding.

Analysis in this part of the chapter that deals with the representation of the traditional or ethnic²¹ wedding begins with a song that in the *Our Perfect Wedding* episode featuring Ratanang and Wanda transitions from the backyard white wedding to their traditional wedding. Consistent with the TV program, here too the song is used to transition from the discussion of white weddings to focus on the representation of ethnic

²¹ In the introduction to this document I indicated that I am using the word ‘traditional’ interchangeably with ethnic.

weddings, and the values and beliefs embedded and communicated through this representation.

Here focus is on how South African reality wedding TV shows represent the white wedding versus the traditional wedding. In this context, traditional or ethnic weddings are idiosyncratic to the Black South African culture. The two wedding TV programs (*Our Perfect Wedding* and *Top Billing Weddings*) analyzed here follow on the footsteps of popular U.S. and United Kingdom wedding reality TV programs. Examples of such programs include *Whose Wedding Is It Anyway?*, *Destination Weddings*, and *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings*. In these versions, also broadcast to South African audiences on DSTV, a pay per view channel, focus is on planning a lavish white wedding.

The analysis will demonstrate that although Black South Africans generally celebrate two different types of weddings, the ethnic wedding, absent in the discourse and representation of overseas TV shows, is also marginalized in the South African versions. This functions within the political economy of television that produces what generates profits rather than taking risks with audiences by representing diversity and losing money. In other words, what has worked elsewhere is copied and reproduced.

In part one where the study deals with the representation of white weddings focus is on word choice. Here too, the study continues with word choice analysis and also draw from Van Leeuwen (2000; 2008) who has written about exclusion in visual representations. He states that social exclusion is achieved by not acknowledging certain things that people do. Consistent with many other CDA scholars, Van Leeuwen (2000, 2008) and Machin and Mayr (2012) have in the context of still images also

argued that images foreground what is considered as attractive and beautiful and background what is unimportant and less purposeful.

Machin and Mayr's (2012) notion of salience is also useful here since in analysis of still images it refers to examining what is made to appear prominent while something else is placed out of focus. This study adapts these authors' ideas of exclusion, foregrounding and backgrounding to the approach the shows use to time spent on each type of wedding. This will demonstrate that the time spent showcasing the white wedding compared to that spent on ethnic ceremonies backgrounds ethnic ceremonies. This section will illustrate that hierarchically, ethnic weddings are relegated and were they people, these weddings would be the 'inferior other' compared to white weddings which are made to seem important and attractive in TV representations.

In televisual representations of Black South African people's weddings, effort is on planning and ensuring a 'top' and 'perfect' success with the white wedding. In sharp contrast, little or no mention is made of the 'traditional' ceremony. When mentioned and featured, the traditional ceremony occupies very little television space or is backgrounded, suggesting that there is no commercial value to showcasing traditional weddings. For instance, Criselda and Siyolo's traditional wedding appears as an insert in three still photographs²² of their ethnic wedding (see example of the photographs included here as image 18). The still photographs are shown for 22 seconds during the introductory segment as the couple narrates stories of their relationship journey. A large amount of airtime is afforded to discussing the white wedding gear such as suits for

²² There are three different photographs with Criselda. In one picture Criselda is photographed with a group of women. In the second still image Criselda and Siyolo are pictured together standing. In the third photograph the couple is sitting down on chairs. A fourth image does not have the couple in it but has young female dancers (it is an action picture) also dressed in ethnic clothes.

grooms and bridal gowns and accessories. Time spent talking about Criselda and Siyolo's white wedding outfits amounts to one minute and 12 seconds in a 10:02 minute episode. In comparison, the amount of time spent talking about the couple's traditional wedding gear totals zero. Besides the 22 seconds in which the audience is shown still photographs of the couple's ethnic wedding there is no verbal reference to the images.

Lexically, the traditional wedding is mentioned once as a bridge to a brief interview with Siyolo moments before the white wedding. In mentioning the traditional wedding Liezel, the presenter says, "you've already gone through all the motions at **your traditional wedding**, but, are all the nerves kicking in again?" In his response, Siyolo does not mention the ethnic wedding and instead talks about his feelings. Liezel's question is the only instance in which the traditional wedding is verbally mentioned. While mentioned, the ethnic wedding is not specifically discussed as is the case with white weddings.

In the still photographs Criselda has decorated her face with dots, a popular practice in the Black culture. Siyolo and Criselda are dressed in clothes inspired by African traditional gear. Siyolo's clothes match Criselda's *iqhiya* or head scarf and her over-shirt. *KwaNtu abafazi bathwala iqhiya. Le yenye yendlela esiye sohlule ngayo umfazi ezintombini* [traditionally married women in the Black culture adorn headscarves. This helps to distinguish those who are married from single women or girls].



Figure 1: Siyolo and Criselda at their 'traditional' wedding

Siyolo has an accessorized knobkerrie in hand, emblematic of ethnic chiefs. A knobkerrie is a short thick stick with a carved head. Interestingly, more than once, Siyolo is referred to as a son of a Xhosa chief. Among many roles, chiefs represent their subjects, mitigate disputes and embody sustenance of cultural knowledge and ethnic practices. However, even with a son of a chief, the traditional wedding is treated as insignificant in the way it is momentarily referenced in the television program. In the entire archive of *Top Billing Weddings* watched there is not one single episode with a central focus on the ethnic wedding or one that features the ethnic wedding in still photographs (as is the case with Siyolo and Criselda whose pictures seem to be useful only to make the point about lineage and thus elevated social status).

On the one hand, the inclusion of the ethnic wedding photographs suggests that the couples' royal lineage warrants recognition and a cautious departure from the program's sole focus which is glamorous white weddings. Although to a limited extent, it

is apparent that royal lineage complicates the reproduction of sameness. In other words, with celebrities or people of a higher social class, the inclusion of ethnic weddings must be justifiable. In this case royal lineage mediates the inclusion. On the other hand, wedding ceremonies of celebrities without royal lineage are white as is the case with Akhona and Siya. Although they are also Black and are celebrities, their ethnic wedding is excluded from the televisual representation. This demonstrates that with people of a higher social class departure from the political economy arrangement of producing sameness must happen in exceptional cases. It is as if ethnic weddings are a threat that would dislodge a higher social status. Overall, the neoliberal project treats Black people's inherent cultural practices in the form of ethnic weddings as disposable in order to safeguard social class. Culture and class are treated as opposites that cannot co-exist depending on social status.

Whereas including ethnic weddings in the celebrity version warrants some justification, the same is not true for weddings featured in *Our Perfect Wedding* as all couples are shown participating in ethnic ceremonies. However, even in *Our Perfect Wedding* ethnic wedding are backgrounded compared to white weddings. For example, in the episode featuring Ratanang and Wanda there is a single audio reference to the "traditional" wedding. The word "traditional" is mentioned as a bridge between scenes. That is, this reference bridges the white wedding and the final segment of the show. As the couple walks off the camera frame after the white wedding, Tumi, the presenter says, "The bride and groom go off to change into their **traditional** outfits." Seconds later, we are shown the couple dancing while in ethnic clothes. The entire broadcast time with the couple in their ethnic clothes receives a total of 1 minute and 19 seconds

of airtime in an hour long episode. This 1 minute and 19 seconds includes the final interview with the presenter, which is conducted while the couple is still in their traditional gear (see figure 2 below). During this interview, there is no mention of the traditional wedding or clothes worn as is the case with for instance the white bridal gown.

The representation of traditional weddings in the two reality TV programs suggests that ethnic weddings are commonsensical for people on a lower social level hence these weddings are a constant feature in *Our Perfect Wedding* while requiring justification for inclusion in *Top Billing Weddings*. Whereas ethnic weddings are disposable in the celebrity version and included but backgrounded in the *Our Perfect Weddings* white weddings feature persistently irrespective of social class or ethnic lineage. As such, wedding reality television shows skillfully engage in endeavors that construct practices moderated by whiteness as more attractive and stable while destabilizing cultural practices that are inherently African. What is represented as attractive hinges on consumerism.



Figure 2: Ratanang and Wanda in ethnic wear

Based on the texts analyzed here we see that audiences are bombarded with the white weddings in ways that subordinate and displace certain African cultural practices and beliefs. Two things require emphasis. The first is that what is represented as important and attractive are practices that are a legacy of colonization. Said (1993) has argued that the values of colonizers continue to be treated as better and to be preferred by people in previously colonized countries. Indeed, embedded in these texts is the treatment of White people's practices as if better and more important. It is white weddings that are made to appear universal, necessary and attractive whereas traditional weddings are evoked for a little while and then fleetingly discarded. The second is that these reality television shows are in the business of producing consumers in contemporary South Africa. The white wedding becomes a highly commodified cultural product that is packaged and sold to South African audiences.

Regarding the traditional wedding, rather than being an important cultural reference point that serves various functions, this type of wedding is relegated to the periphery and almost erased in the celebrity version. Also, instead of representing Black South Africans weddings with their complexities, the wedding media elect to simplify the representation by predominantly focusing on the white wedding. As such, the political economy of these programs is clear: profits should be maximized irrespective of cultural ruin and whatever does not work to increase profits or does not fit generic scripts should be largely ignored.

Black Bridal Looks



Figure 3: Ratanang



Figure 4: Criselda



Figure 5: Aletta



Figure 6: Siya

Machin and Mayr (2012) state that in conducting iconographical analysis some of the questions to be asked include how people are represented and what beliefs are communicated through the representation. Analysis here is based on bridal images or what this study refers to as a hegemonic bridal look. The point is not that beauty is

reducible to hair, however, scholars have argued that hair has become one way in which beauty is coded in the media. Wolf (2013) states that hair has become a big part of the beauty package. Whether by accident or intentionally, predominantly *Our Perfect Weddings* and *Top Billing Weddings* feature Black women whose idea of beauty is rooted in whiteness specifically with regard to hair.



Figure 7: Aletta during dress fittings without a weave

Evident in images one to six is the absence of 'natural'²³ Black hair. In these TV shows brides featured have noticeably fake or straightened hair rather than their hair as it grows naturally from their scalp. During her dress fittings, Aletta can be seen with parts of her hair peeping out from under *iqhiya* or head scarf (see Figure 7 above). This is different from the picture on page 114 taken on the day of her wedding in which Aletta has a weave. hooks (1992) found a general absence of natural Black hair in the media and states that the absence of natural Black hair has led Black people to place great

²³ Black hair that is not chemically processed/straightened/ relaxed is in the Black South African community called natural hair. This is despite other hair products that can at times be used to soften the hair. Hair is natural if it is not made to resemble that of non-Blacks.

importance in straightened hair. In my archive of different episodes of *Our Perfect Wedding* there is not a single bride with natural Black hair.

The television shows construct natural hair as ugly and 'un-bride-like' and or that a bride with 'natural' hair is failing to be a beautiful bride. As such, Blackness is either ignored or whitewashed. This foregrounds the neoliberal practice of spending money in order to 'fit into' the constructed and normalized beauty standard. Focus is therefore on whiteness and neoliberalism with Black women participating in these shows as neoliberal subjects who contribute to stabilizing Black looks as inadequate and in need of 'white' improvement. Yet, the neoliberal and post-feminist notion of spending is not overtly expressed in the shows.

The absence of natural Black hair cements the idea that natural Black hair is inferior to that of White women and should be hidden from sight. The wigs and weaves of fake hair are worn over existing (natural) hair as a cover up. This is similar to the discourse of falsehood that perpetuates hegemonic whiteness as a norm and covering up what is considered imperfect (Roberts, 2007). These constructions function to suggest that natural hair is ugly and unfitting of important occasions in which beauty is stressed, occasions such as white weddings. Indeed, by using fake hair the brides themselves participate in this hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminist set up of consumerism, buying hair in order to fit into a constructed narrow beauty ideal that casts out those without money. The examples included on page 115 show hair that is store bought.

Through this representation of brides, these programs safeguard the hegemonic beauty standards that suggest how a bride and women in their daily lives ought to

showcase their beauty. There are two simultaneous processes in action. The first is the perpetuation of consumerism that emphasizes a hegemonic beauty standard. The second is the erasure of Black women's natural hair suggesting that natural hair is inferior and that to be beautiful, Black women must be whitewashed. As such, the TV shows, in capturing the imagination of women, collapse consumerism and a hegemonic a bridal look together such that both function as indicators of beauty. Erasing natural hair is not simply about the fluidity of identity or changing personal representations in line with global beauty trends that prefer whiteness feminine standards. Rather, it is about how self-representation on the part of brides favor a homogeneous look that displaces natural hair and how reality wedding TV programs repeatedly choose to feature weddings with brides who have processed hair or store bought hair to construct natural Black hair as inferior and unworthy of public spaces such as weddings.

To be beautiful, then, Black brides learn to embrace a version of bride-hood that downplays their Black features such as hair and instead one that assimilates itself to whiteness and therefore sameness. Unnatural hair is depicted as a beauty ritual for brides and supposedly makes Black brides more bride-like. By choosing to feature Black brides whose idea of beautiful hair emulates White feminine looks, the shows conform to the representational mode that homogenizes women and in the process also disallows racial difference even as brides are constructed as showcasing their own individual styles and uniqueness. As such, these TV programs construct an image of Black bride-hood that hinges on representing Black looks as if inadequate and in need of white correction, an illustration of deeper politics of racial inequality. However, since

these are entertaining wedding shows, the cultural representations of Black women seem harmless and even appropriate.

Using Space to Index Social Class

Social inequality in representations of white weddings is also legitimized through the use of space and social actors. This analysis follows the iconographical analysis strategy of Machin and Mayr (2012) that focuses on salience (prominence), setting (use of space), and transivity (action). Using these iconographical tools of Multi Modal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) this study examines issues regarding the use of space to index the social class of participants. This analysis is compatible with the CDA framework of identifying social wrongs (van Dijk, 2003). In this analysis focus is on the role of space and what social space means in terms of representations specifically about social class.



Figure 8: Interview setting for Criselda and Siyolo on Top Billing Weddings

The camera moves at medium pace showing medium shots of a brown concrete building with large windows. Included in the scene are wide views of what looks like a golf course and a large pond (see Figure 8 above). A table with different colorful

samplings of foods, fruits and flowers appears next on a close shot and three people are selecting from the items on the table and placing small food items on small plates before walking a short distance to patio furniture set on the green lawn close by. As the couple and the presenter settle on the furniture, the brown building and the pond provide a backdrop to the setting. The visuals precede the introduction of Criselda and Siyolo the celebrity couple about to be married.

Throughout the introductory segment as the couple answers Liezel's questions about how they met; the audience is offered b-roll cuts²⁴ that showcase the wide views of the expansive interview setting. The interview scene (as in the image on the previous page) includes a large pond that occasionally acts as a backdrop to the interview setting. Liezel sits on a single seater separated by a small table across from Siyolo and Criseda who are seated on a double-seater patio couch. Close by there is a table with sparse elements that just like the other empty chairs do not distract attention away from the social actors in this scene. This is standard for *Top Billing Wedding* episodes where the audience is taken on a delightful journey with elaborate background views. The views are often shown before a voice over introduces the couple to be married. In other words, the camera first shows the setting followed by the voice over that references the venue functioning as the interview location (often a wine estate or a golf course).

The space is large, clean and open, which means that focus is on the couple and the views. Attention is not taken away from the celebrity couple (the main social actors) and the openness of the space indexes their higher social class. In this space, items such as the lawn furniture fit with the scene and add to the wide views rather than subtract from them by being too imposing or confusing.

²⁴ Other shots are interspersed with the main shot.

The couple is prominently foregrounded such that audiences are not left wondering why certain items are included. Instead, the furniture is placed in the scene as normal everyday items that belong without question. In this context, space, its use and items within the space communicate the belief that those with money occupy wide and open spaces with items that 'fit in'. In other words, space, objects and social actors are used to communicate the idea of elaborateness and belonging. The sparseness of the space symbolizes the higher social class of the couple.

In addition, the visual communication highlights the venue in what appears to be product placement in the program, as the voice over mentions the venue by name just like in an advertisement. In fact, it is not only the name that is mentioned but through visuals the venue is also advertised. Product placement, unlike everyday product advertising, subtly draws attention to the product or service without appearing like a promotion. Product placement has been shown to be effective in lifestyle programs and has been used for decades in the U.S. context. In South Africa, *Top Billing*, the flagship show of *Top Billing Weddings* is a primary example of product placement with the show working as a promotion for various businesses, designers, retailers and glamorous venues in particular. *Top Billing Weddings* is an insert in *Top Billing* a lifestyle program that has been on air for decades as explained in the methodology section.

As the couple responds to questions about their love journey the audience is also provided on-screen subtitles and a voice-over offers additional insight about the couples' biographies. For instance, Criselda, the celebrity bride to-be is introduced this way: "Criselda is known continent wide as a mother, media mogul, motivational speaker and ex-nurse" while Siyolo, the groom is introduced to the audience through a voiceover

as an “engineer, construction company MD, businessman and father.” Beyond the couple as people, their positions trump their personhood since focus is on their various titles, roles and achievements.



Figure 9: Ratanang and Wanda in *Our Perfect Wedding*



Figure 10: Tshepo and Busi a couple in *Our Perfect Wedding*

Highlighting the audio-visual introduction of the celebrity couple is purposeful in order to draw parallels with how couples in *Our Perfect Wedding* are introduced and to illustrate that the introduction locates the couples within particular social classes. For example, whereas we see open spaces in the introduction of the celebrity couple, introducing the couples on *Our Perfect Wedding*, which does not feature celebrities,

involves scenes of couples on couches as the examples above demonstrate (see Figures 9 and 10 on page 123).

Regarding transitivity or the action of the scene whereas celebrity couples are shown in action selecting tasty foods from exquisitely set tables as in the example about Criselda and Siyolo, or walking to black German sedans (see Figure 11 on the next page), couples in *Our Perfect Wedding* are introduced while confined to small spaces (refer to Figures 9 and 10 on page 123). Even when other items are shown in the space these are backgrounded such that these are not immediately obvious or identifiable.

However, when a celebrity couple is also featured sitting down on couches (see Figure 12 on the next page) there is a presenter visible on the set and the use of space is different. For instance, in Figure 12 the couple appears in the celebrity version, *Top Billing Weddings*, and they are seated on a couch which is much bigger than those seen in *Our Perfect Wedding*. In addition to the presence of a presenter, the space is also bigger and there are other items prominently taking up space in the background (these items are also easy to identify). This is different from how the representation of the setting and transitivity is constructed in *Our Perfect Wedding*.

Critical discourse practitioners such as Van Dijk (2003) have written extensively about the representation of people in ways that index their social status. Couples in *Our Perfect Wedding* are featured in small spaces. This draws attention to their inferior social status within a social hierarchy in which those with money occupy open spaces while 'others' are represented as constrained to small homogeneous spaces such as two seater couches. For instance, Ratanang and Wanda (Figure 9 on page 123) like Tsepho and Busi (Figure 10 on page 123) are constrained to a couch.



Figure 11: Introducing Sibabili and Nokubonga on Top Billing Weddings



Figure 12: Akhona and Siya in on Top Billing Weddings with the presenter

Here are some key points: First, emphasis on the setting and space is tied to the realities of working class, non-celebrity or even poor Black South Africans who were

previously restricted to small spaces in townships. In South Africa, townships are residential areas predominantly populated by Black people. Townships are a legacy of apartheid and are located away from suburbs. These are spaces previously exclusively reserved for Black people. Although the country is now a democracy, compared to areas previously inhabited by White people, townships have a higher population of poorer people. Using space to index social status is possibly justified as a 'realistic' representation of each couples' social realities. For participants in *Our Perfect Wedding*, the visual representation of social status makes a spectacle of their humble everyday realities with just a couch and confined to small spaces compared to the expansive space and items prominently captured in *Top Billing Weddings*.

Besides space, elements within a space also indicate social status. For instance, in one scene (see Figure 13 on the next page), Criselda, the celebrity bride is interviewed in what appears to be a bedroom in a hotel and the elements within the space are prominently captured. There are two single beds with white linen, three silver and gold scatter cushions on each bed, a wide padded velvet looking sofa, and a white bed side lamp which provides some light to the room. One person is shown helping Criselda get ready for her wedding. In Criselda's cozy space there are only three people, herself included. This contrasts with images of Ratanang who is generally featured with other people in cluttered spaces.

In one scene Ratanang, the bride in *Our Perfect Wedding* is fleetingly shown arriving in a mid-range red VW²⁵ car (see Figure 14 on the next page). As the camera moves into the house, there are a number of people in the space, some seated and

²⁵ This VW car looks like a Polo or Golf 5. While the price of each varies, none of these cars is considered a high class car.

others standing. In another room in the same house there are more people including the woman helping Ratanang get ready (see Figure 15 on page 127). Also, in an earlier scene, Ratanang's family is shown as a group in the kitchen, see Figures 16 (a) and (b) on page 128.



Figure 13: Criselda in conversation with Liezel of Top Billing Weddings



Figure 14: Ratanang arriving in a red car



Figure 15: Ratanang being helped into her white bridal gown



Figure 16(a): Ratanang's family in the kitchen



Figure 16 (b): Same scene as 16 (a) with Ratanang's family in the kitchen

This representation functions to reinforce the idea that people considered important are shown as individuals (see Van Dijk, 2003; Machin and Mayr, 2012; Van Leeuwen, 2000 for a discussion on the representation of people held in low regard). People who are not celebrities are not only trapped in small spaces but are also confined to such spaces as groups. Criselda, the celebrity bride and Siyolo, the celebrity groom mostly appear in open and glamorous spaces as individuals rather than in a group, with the exception of a scene in church and when Siyolo is interviewed with his groomsmen. Also, after the wedding, participants in *Top Billing Weddings* are

interviewed as individuals or in sets of two rather than in a group format. Yet, Ratanang's family and Ratanang, are generally represented with two or more other people.

What we see here is that space is used to apportion classist treatment. The underlying representation of space and social action in these two programs reinforces the hegemonic neoliberal idea that limitless space and glamor are exclusively for people with money - a conformist fulfillment of class norms. The different ways in which celebrity couples are showcased in *Top Billing Weddings* versus couples and participants in *Our Perfect Wedding* is consistent with Euro-American notions of individuality, which are contrary to the African notion of community. In the celebrity version, families of the couples are largely absent and celebrities are not shown laboring for their weddings. This is different from the representation of people in lower social classes who are often shown in groups and engaged in wedding work whether running errands or food tasting. Money and the ability to spend displaces family based activities as people in higher social classes can procure services and in that way escape doing work that in the lower social classes is work regarded as family activities.

Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrates that neoliberal and post-feminist narratives are used to exemplify what is contemporary and attractive while the African culture is portrayed as inconsequential and disposable.

Thematically, the chapter has shown how wedding reality TV programs construct, represent and normalize ideologies about white weddings as spaces of excessiveness. The representations prioritize white above traditional weddings and portray white

weddings as universal, attractive and necessary. For example, the data illustrate how white weddings are constructed as events that mark a couple's love journey, a representation that works to alleviate the family and couple's disappointments. Analysis also showed that the wedding bridal gown itself is constructed as a magical item that metaphorically melts away past relationship pain and migrates a bride to womanhood. However, ethnic weddings as ceremonies that embed African beliefs and practices are relegated and represented fleetingly as if unnecessary and without any real function. None of the functions of ethnic weddings is represented on both TV programs analyzed. In addition, while white weddings are a constant feature in these reality TV shows, ethnic weddings are disposable especially with people in higher social classes such as celebrities. Ethnic weddings are made to appear normal for people in lower social statuses and warranting justification for those in higher classes.

In very similar ways, Black feminine looks, hair specifically are rendered inadequate, whitewashed and standardized in these representations. Such actions are indicative of symbolic violence toward Black women whose hair is being erased. As such, rather than represent Black looks in their variety, uniformity is created and normalized. Key to this is the notion of purchasing a standard look that works within the neoliberal practice of consumerism and acts of brides actively choosing bridal gowns and bridal appearances cohere to the post-feminist ideals of choice.

Beyond high spending, these representations also signify other neoliberal and post-feminist perspectives of individuality and choice. In televisual representations, women are not represented as being subordinated to anyone, including their grooms suggesting independence. This clashes with African group norms of collectivism and

culturally defined conduct articulated by Africana womanists who describe how Africana women assent to male superiority and that their identity is culturally defined rather than being individually asserted.

Nonetheless, while these reality television programs, *Our Perfect Wedding* specifically, are positive examples for including on television people who have been on the margins, their rhetoric emphasizes consumption. In a country with a legacy of Black oppression where poverty still has a Black face, uncritical reproduction of discourses of consumerism glamorize values of deception, self-doubt and dissatisfaction rather than inculcate a culture of self-acceptance, whether of beauty or socio-economic status.

CHAPTER 6

AUDIENCE FACEBOOK DISCOURSE: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The key question this chapter attempts to answer is: how do audiences of the wedding reality TV shows interpret the representations of weddings and what does that reveal about the meaning of Blackness in present day South Africa? With this question in mind, the aim of this chapter is to investigate the connections between discourse and social structures so as to reveal the shared beliefs of the commentators who are audiences of the TV shows analyzed.

One of the aims of critical discourse analysis is to examine relations between discourse and ideology and this chapter fits in with this aim. Based on the data examination, this chapter is categorized into seven sections and a chapter summary. The analysis is based on lexical examination which includes an analysis of pronouns and metaphors since these linguistic features in the context of this chapter work to directly and indirectly reveal underlying hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminist beliefs about weddings. There are also traces of Africana womanism identifiable in the comments.

Consistent with the theme of tension identified in Chapter Five, this entire chapter also proceeds with this same theme elaborating how tension suffuses online narratives overflowing from the discursive elements of the TV shows. With this theme of tension in mind, the first section elaborates on the tensions emerging from the co-existence of white and traditional weddings, a tension that illuminates issues of race, class and culture. The second section expands the discussion based on the themes that emerged

and deal with the discursive construction of white weddings as morally distasteful.

Section three provides an in-depth discussion of the attendant discourse that points to a preference for African cultural practices but conceals subtle and nuanced narratives of class and consumerism.

The fourth section discusses the emergent discursive relationship between weddings and marriage, highlighting that women are more significantly associated with weddings while a link is made between men and marriage. In other words, there is a reproduction of the hegemonic narratives of the wedding TV programs that produce women as excessive spenders on superfluous objects of one time use, or short-termism, compared with men who are focused on marriage, or long termism. The fifth section extends discussions stressed in the first four sections and deals with the discursive construction of a 'perfect' wedding and illustrates that comparatively between the two TV programs there is an overall audience discourse that assesses weddings based on the participants' social class, a fulfillment of neoliberal thinking about class norms. Within this context, unsurprisingly, celebrity weddings are more positively judged compared to those of participants in *Our Perfect Wedding*.

Section six deals with the normative attention placed on brides, scrutiny that expands to body shaming from which men are excluded. In the final part I discuss the issue of gendered blame and gendered responsibilities with women constructed as the gender that dreams of weddings and men as responsible for fulfilling women's dreams. The chapter concludes with a summary that emphasizes the key points made.

As explained in the methodology section, the analysis is based on 40 comments 20 from the two episodes of *Our Perfect Wedding* and another 20 from the two episodes

of *Top Billing Weddings*. Comments were selected based the number of reactions each comment received. Facebook has a feature that allows for people to filter comments based on the most commented on comments, those either replied to or “liked.” Only the top 10 comments from each episode that made reference to the wedding or bride were selected. There are comments that were excluded even though they drew many reactions. Examples of these comments include questions about the rebroadcast schedule of the programs and those that relate to the presenters personally with no mention of the wedding or couple being married.

The comments are generated by people who actively participate in watching the shows and whose acts of watching motivate them to talk back to the wedding programs and to one another about the shows. Through the act of posting and commenting online, these Facebook users share their views about the episodes broadcast and their views about weddings. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, comments made about episodes of *Our Perfect Wedding* on Facebook in general and on the *Our Perfect Wedding* page are some of the most dominant on Sundays when the program is on air. In other words, every week, debates about the program become some of the trending topics among Facebook users in South Africa. Commenting on these shows has become a pattern as a deluge of comments occur during or following the broadcast of the programs.

Their White Weddings, Our Traditional Weddings: Race, Class and Culture

This section illustrates that the tension evident in the representation of the white and ethnic weddings on the wedding TV programs overflows into and becomes embedded in the audience discourse. The previous chapter discussed that when the TV

programs cover celebrities, the ethnic wedding is constructed as a disposable event that when included requires justification. The treatment of the ethnic wedding lays bare the tense intersection of not just the political economy of the shows but also issues of consumerism, class and culture. The tension is differentially visible in the non-celebrity wedding show version in which the ethnic wedding is present but backgrounded, briefly shown, or not discussed at all but is seemingly associated with people of a lower social class. Absent in televisual representations, ethnic weddings of celebrities are also missing in online discussions. As such, the discussion on ethnic weddings focuses on comments made on *Our Perfect Wedding*.

One of the first things noticeable in the comments is a departure from the positive representation of white weddings to a positive representation of and preference for traditional weddings. In the examples sampled below, the two weddings are compared and contrary to the inferior representation of ethnic weddings on television, in the comments analyzed below there is strategy of positive self-presentation referencing the traditional wedding and negative other presentation referencing the white wedding. What is interesting is that the tension also relates to race (Black versus White) and the weddings²⁶ associated with the two races. This tension is evident in the use of the words **Black** and **White** as well as **traditional**, *utsiki* [ceremony of being introduced to the groom's family] and possessive pronouns such as **us**, **our**, **we**, and **my** and the pronoun **these** as in the following examples.

1. Our perfect wedding team didn't do anything wrong. They were invited to

broadcast, I hope **we** will learn something from this. And *lento ithandwa sithi*

²⁶ The white wedding came via White people to Black South Africans although it has been embraced and practiced in the Black society for decades. See Erlank (2014) for a fuller discussion on the history of white/church weddings in the Black culture in South Africa.

ladies siyakuthanda usoloko sifuna ubomi bethu bubonwe yi [we are the ones who like this ladies, we like to always display our lives for the] public I don't mind *utshatela ententeni ekhaya* and *nalapho* [having my wedding ceremony in a tent/marquee at home and even then] if we not ready financially *manditye utsiki ndiyekwa* [let me have *utsiki*²⁷ and just go to] home affairs *qha*. (Buccee, OPW).

2. It's **these** "white expensive wedding" thingzzz which puts people under unnecessary pressure. Black people let's stick to **our** culture & do **our** own beautiful trendy modernised traditional wedding which u don't have to spend thousands of rands on hiring expensive venues; ridiculously priced white wedding gowns; etc. This is a sign **my** fellow black people that **we** must to away with white weddings. And to make things worse u find **us** black people having a white wedding first putting it a priority and traditional wedding. #whiteweddingsmustfall (Thabang, OPW).
3. Awaiting for an era where **we** will accept that we good at traditional wedding than white. (Mite, OPW).
4. **These** white weddings will be the death of love. I know of countless couples who have intense connected marriages but have never had this elusive white wedding. It is all bullshit. This keeping up with the Khumalos is crazy. It has people with Kekana budgets wanting Motsepe weddings. It is all unnecessary fuckery. This ostentatious display of wealth by couples. Most end up eyeball

²⁷ *Utsiki* can be done on its own without any celebration. If done after the wedding, *utsiki* often follows after the traditional wedding ceremony. The highlight is the meat fed to a bride or more appropriately a newly married woman whom in the Xhosa language is called *umtshakazi*. During *utsiki* a bride is also given a new first name, receives marriage advice, and her clothes change to those of a newly married Black woman. At this point the woman can in the Xhosa language be called *umtshakazi* or *umakoti*. These terms are often used interchangeably to mean newly married woman.

deep in debt before their one week anniversary. All because they want **us** on these social networks to hail their wedding. The thing is, there is a new wedding every seven days. For anyone to get into debt so that some Facebook commentator who is not married, has never even had cows not even I beestock paid for them can say "I like her dress" it is all bullshit. Let's not fall for that ish. It's a trap. (Kekana, OPW).

The use of the in-group designator, through the pronouns **us**, **our**, **we**, and **my** (1, 2, 3, 4) and an out-group designator, **these** (2, 4) establishes a contrast between **us** and **our traditional wedding** (2, 3) and **them** and **their white weddings** (2, 3, 4). In these examples we see that the words Black and the pronouns function to construct the in-group that has shared beliefs. Note the use of **my fellow Black people** (2), the in-group that must **learn** (1) to **stick to our culture** (2). The in-group, the Black race and culture are bound up with the positively constructed traditional wedding **our own beautiful** (2) at which **we are good** (3). The possessives positively depict **our traditional wedding** (2) as something that belongs to **our culture** (2) as Black people. In addition, the repetitive use of the possessive pronouns is itself a rhetorical device that works within the overall strategy of emphasizing 'Our good things and Their bad ones' (Van Dijk, 2003, p. 83). The word '**good**' (3) is specifically used to refer to the traditional wedding as something that is both '**ours**' and '**good**' and although not directly mentioned, based on the context, we can infer that the 'bad thing' is the white wedding.

These are people engaged in the process of de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing (Van Leeuwen, 2008), the episodes as they draw from what they have watched in order to make comments. De-contextualizing means the process of

excerpting what is deemed important from the context of its original use while by re-contextualization means the act of placing the information extracted into a new context. Through the process of de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing, commentators are engaged in ideological strategies of positive self-representation and negative other-representation.

As we can see here the traditional wedding is compared to the white wedding and is preferred because it is less expensive than its white counterpart. In addition, the traditional wedding requires some qualifying. Note the inclusion of the word '**modern**' (2) as an appendix to traditional weddings suggesting that what is cultural is often considered an opposite of modern, hence the need to include the word to make traditional weddings comparable by stature to white weddings and perhaps to signify a more dynamic conception of culture that changes with time. There is this tension between traditional and white weddings with white weddings at once represented as that which is beautiful but also expensive while traditional weddings are what is cultural and therefore should be the only thing celebrated by Black people.

However, there is an undertone of consumerism that is not entirely displaced. This consumerism narrative illustrates another level of tension between white weddings (not inherently Black), traditional weddings and culture (inherently Black). In comments two and four the white wedding is simultaneously disgraced, '**will be the death of love**' (3) but its discursive features are used in reference to traditional weddings. For example, '**trendy and modernized**' (2).

Further, we find in-group designators that construct a contrast between the named in-group and the un-named out-group. However, since white weddings in the

South African context are a legacy of colonization (Erlank, 2014) we can infer that the un-named group are White people. This un-named out-group is tied with white weddings, which are negatively represented in the comments. Note the use of **these white expensive wedding thingzzz** (2) and **these white weddings** (4). While the white weddings are named they are also referred to using the pronoun **these** perhaps for emphasis and to suggest that white weddings are despised specifically if we consider the inclusion of the word **thingzzz** (2), the hashtag **#whiteweddingsmustfall** (3) and the metaphor **death of love** (4).

The hashtag **#whiteweddingsmustfall** (3) requires elaboration. On its own it functions within the larger de-colonial narrative in larger South African public debates. Such debates embed the phrase 'must fall'. This phrase gained popularity in 2015 and can be traced back to the period beginning in March 2015 when students at the University of Cape Town protested against the presence of the Rhodes statue on campus. This movement against colonial and apartheid statues resulted in the removal of statues of colonial and apartheid masters. The hashtag phrase 'must fall' has been embedded in other movements such as the **feesmustfall** campaign that gripped the country later in 2015 and is used alongside anything that is deemed wrong and should 'fall' or end. Ending the comment with the hashtag is a call to action for Black people to negate white weddings and go back to their **good** (3) traditional weddings.

White Weddings, Excessive Spending: Cause for Moral Panics

The four comments analyzed above also demonstrate moral panics. Consistent with the idea of tension, what we also find here is tension between 'us', those who are smart and who see through the **'bullshit'** (4) vs 'them' the dupes who participate in

these white expensive wedding thingzzz (2). Note the words **Bullshit, ish, trap** (4) that negatively frame white weddings and call for their social rejection. In fact, these four comments are making a moralistic argument or what Cohen (1972) calls moral panics. Moral panics is when “people become concerned about a particular issue or perceived episode that threatens societal values and sometimes the subject of the moral panics has been in existence long enough...[that] society erects [it] to show its members what should be avoided” (Cohen, 1972, p.9-10). This means questioning what is represented as the norm (Cohen, 1972; Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994). In the examples above, the commentators are questioning the white wedding, itself an event that has long become a part of the Black society in South Africa, is represented as normal, stable, necessary and attractive in the media as argued in Chapter Five. However, as we can see here the white wedding is challenged and resisted by audiences.

The challenge and resistance is consistent with the assertion Cohen (1972) makes that not all images are interpreted the way the mass media intend. As illustrated by these examples, there is resistance to the hegemonic positive representation of the white wedding and such a representation is challenged by reconstructing the traditional wedding as something that is preferred. We can look at this struggle as what Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) say is what happens when “wrongdoings with harmful actions” are noted by people (p.29). Such wrongdoings are seen as a “folk devil”, an “enemy or agent threatening or damaging behavior or condition, a struggle over cultural representations attempting to establish dominance over others” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2010, p.27-30). This dominance is actively resisted.

What is also interesting is that there are only four comments that are resisting the embrace of white weddings, making these comments outliers in the 40 comments analyzed. Those who question what is happening feel that “something should be done” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994, p.31). Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2010) also add that moral panics can “leave others untouched” (p.3, 35). Indeed, here too moral panics are not experienced by everyone.

What is glaring in the normative logics of neoliberalism is how moral panics are class specific. All of the comments calling attention to the dilapidating effect of the consumerism associated with Black people’s white weddings do not extend to Black celebrities. Celebrity social status establishes for this group of people rules and standards that seem to locate celebrities beyond reproach – the idea is that they have money, so have no spending limits whereas people in lower social classes are surveilled, their actions questioned and rules formulated by which they have to abide.

This narrative of a *return* to the traditional wedding, which suggests an abandonment of the white wedding rather than a co-existence of the two, is similar to suggestions made by Africana womanists, Hudson-Weems in particular, for Africans to *reclaim* themselves. Reclaim and return mean that something was once a part of oneself, then was neglected and must now be again taken up. This group has nostalgia for Blackness.

What is missing in the debate, as argued is the same call to a higher class of Black South Africans. That is, the narrative itself is exclusionary and leaves out Black people with a higher social status. This exclusion marks another in and out group

polarity, an intra-cultural discord. In this case those in the in-group are bound by their lower social status, a commonality that leaves out the wealthy.

Class, Consumption and the Cheap Traditional Weddings

Here, it is necessary to more rigorously examine the rationalities of a call for the demise of white weddings and a return to traditional weddings since this call embeds class rhetoric. A further analysis of the discourse of the comments reveals that there is something else that is embedded in these comments beyond the preference for traditional weddings – something that is class based. This class narrative co-exists in tension with culture. This means that traditional weddings are not preferred because it is ‘our culture’ (they are our good thing) but, as we can see in the comments preference for traditional weddings is rooted in their cost. These events are seen to be cheaper than white weddings. Note the use of the words *tsiki* [ceremony to welcome a woman to her husband’s home] (1), which in the comments is juxtaposed with expensive (white) **wedding"thingzzz**, which place **unnecessary pressure**, for couples to **spend thousands if [of] rands**²⁸, in **expensive** venues; purchasing **ridiculously priced** white wedding gowns (2), when they have **Kekana budgets**, yet want to perform **Motsepe weddings**, that demand an **ostentatious display of wealth**, in which case couples end up **eyeball deep in debt** (4).

What is repeatedly deployed in the comments is an entanglement of African cultural practices in the form of the traditional wedding as cheaper and easier to perform. Comparatively, white weddings as associated with excessive consumerism, are something scoffed at in some of the comments. In short, what we find here is co-

²⁸ The Rand is South Africa’s currency.

located tension underpinned by consumption, which foreground notions of class and culture with the African culture relegated to something of a last resort. In the entangled world of neoliberal post feminism, the question of choice and women's empowerment lurks large and co-exists in these comments with the search for what is African as in the argument made by Africana womanists, in other words, for a reclaiming of the Africana self.

The moral panics therefore function as a sentimental invocation of what is African versus what is not. However, this invocation is in itself hollowed by the discourse that ties African weddings to penny-pinching. What is obliterated from view is the neoliberal embrace of class scaffolding. There is an awkward treatment of traditional weddings in these comments - at once preferred but also subordinated to white weddings. Yet still, with white weddings too, their association with money elevates their status while also displacing their preference. In addition, there is a pained struggle to construct what is "truly" African, what is "ours" and to define what is appropriate for the Black society to participate in and under what circumstances.

Also consider this comment:

5. What happened to her was not nice BUT the guy said she likes nagging, she probably nagged abt having a wedding despite their financial conditions... vague... They moved from Fourways to Soweto due to noise restrictions for the wedding and they wanted a bigger place to accommodate people! Move places for a wedding?? What people??? She is in denial of their financial situation!!! (Tiro, OPW).

Here, we again find the idea of money being emphasized through the words **financial conditions** and **financial situation** (5) which emblemizes and reinforces the notion of excessive consumerism at these events. If we consider the five examples, we find tension in the discourse around the production of white weddings in which these events are simultaneously elevated and rejected. This becomes more evident when we examine some of the metaphors used in the comments. For instance, Kekana writes, **Kekana budgets, keeping up with, Motsepe weddings, eyeball deep in debt, death of love** (4). The phrase **keeping up with**(4), which emulates the reality TV program, *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, thematically ties the visible display of extravagance in *Keeping up with the Kardashians* to illustrate that in enacting white weddings people are emulating the consumption evident in that program. Also, the **Motsepe** name indexes wealth and freedom of choice. In 2009, *Forbes* reported that Mr Patrice Motsepe became the first Black South African billionaire. A **Motsepe wedding** is a metaphor for wealth and extravagance. Comparatively, **Kekana budgets** represents spending constraint (Kekana associates herself with the lower social class). Kekana is using what Machin and Mayr (2012) and Fairclough (1995) refer to as seeking co-membership to a group through the use of her name. By using her name Kekana presents her views as trustworthy since she is not only on the same level as those who are not wealthy but is also of the same race – in-group membership.

The metaphor **eyeball deep in debt** (4) emphasizes the extent of financial ruin couples will face. It prompts a visual image of a person standing up and almost fully submerged and unable to see. In other words, people will be sinking in a financial sea of debt where problems will make it hard for them to navigate their way out; hence white

weddings should be rejected and replaced with traditional weddings including *utsiki* [ceremony to welcome a woman to her husband's home].

To conclude this section, what is noteworthy are the dynamics between consumer excess tied to social class on the one hand, and the guise of a preference for the African culture on the other. Yet, there is social acceptability of white weddings as events of class underpinned by spending. Excessive consumption is not outright challenged or displaced but postponed to a later date, creating a tension between spending now and spending later rather than directly between culture and spending. For example, in comment one Buccee uses the words '**if not financially ready**' to suggest that having a low-key wedding in a marquee and going to home affairs are interim arrangements rather than a permanent solution. This implies that when financially ready she would spend on a white wedding something not unusual for couples to do in the Black South African society. This narrative is similar to that used in comment four in which white weddings are not entirely displaced but are tied to class in the personhood of Motsepe, a South African billionaire. In other words, the comments illustrate a pseudo counter-class argument in which consumption remains intact. In these comments we find an intersection of race, culture, class, underpinned by hegemonic neoliberal post-feminist narratives.

Weddings versus Marriage

Beyond the tension between traditional and white weddings which extends to class and culture, we also find a degree of tension between the notions of weddings and marriage. Whereas the comments are based on wedding television programs, the comments below also specifically mention the term 'marriage'. The programs' names,

Our Perfect Wedding and *Top Billing Weddings* derive from the English language and the inclusion of the words 'wedding' and 'weddings' functions to signify a separation between a wedding and a marriage and to limit the representational scope to weddings. However, there is a linguistic issue that is of interest. In isiXhosa, for instance, the second most spoken South African indigenous language (my home language), there is no linguistic demarcation between wedding (*umtshato*) and marriage (*umtshato*). The implication is that a wedding and a marriage flow into each other and are at least linguistically not separate. The point here is that although comments analyzed are based on wedding TV shows, the audiences' comments also refer to marriage, casting a demarcation between weddings and marriage. However, the word 'wedding' still appears more prominently than the word 'marriage', which appears eight times, followed by 'married' at two times and lastly 'marrying' appearing once in the comments. In total, these three interrelated words appear 11 times in eight comments (comments 4 on page 136, and 6 to 12 on page 146 and 147).

Although the comments seem to seamlessly fit into the narrative of reality weddings TV programs by focusing on weddings and brides, these eight comments in the sample deviate from the wedding narrative by indexing marriage. In the entire archive the word 'wedding' appears 35 times. Based on lexical analysis, and using the CDA strategy of positive versus negative representation, I examine the function of the inclusion of 'marriage' mentioned in comments 4 (see page 136) and 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 below:

6. The show was depressing. I wish that both the bride and groom get over this terrible ordeal. This lady knew what was happening. They have been **married** for

- 7 years already. She knew their financial situation. The guy was protecting both of them. I hope they have learnt to own their lives and not live it 4 anyone else. 7 years of a perfect **marriage** ruined for 15 minutes of fame. (Khanyi 1, OPW).
7. Wow ths is Why I love **weddings** than **Marriages** 😊. All the best Guys u looked Stunning! (Sizakele, TBW)
 8. Many people should follow her example, because she didn't hide her status and find the one who loves her like that.I wish her the best of lucky in her **marriage**. (Misheck, TBW).
 9. Wow...may God be the binding glue in their **marriage** & make them happy ever after. (Sithabisile, TBW).
 10. Congratulations Akona....may the good Lord bless your **Marriage** to Siyanda and may it have eternal peace. I am proud of you Man.....this is really a blessing and **marriage** from God. Treasure her:). (Martha, TBW).
 11. So out of all the dresses she liked this one? Tshepo Masipa - This dress is a big let down...feel like the lady has nt healed from the cheating n i also feel strongly tht this man is trying to fix his mistake by **marrying** the poor lady...the **marriage** might be founded on the wrong reasons.... (Mashadi, OPW).
 12. Indeed Criselda a woman of courage, I pray God bless u n ur new family mightily. U deserve al d best dear lady...Mr Siyolo, He hu finds a **wyf**, finds a gud thing n receives "favour" from the Lord...Congratulations sir! (Masechaba , TBW).

Table 1

	Wedding	Marriage
Number of mentions	35 (entire archive)	11

Note: **married for 7 years already...7 years of a perfect marriage** ruined for **15 minutes of fame** (6). In this comment, there is a strategic positive representation of marriage as something longer lasting - a “perfect marriage of 7 years” - and a negative production of weddings - a fleeting temporal event of “15 minutes.” Also note: **intense connected marriages but have never had this elusive white wedding** (4) which is a direct comparison between weddings and marriage. In these two comments marriage is positively represented whereas weddings are denigrated. Marriage is not directly mentioned in comment 12 but inferred through the use of the word ‘wife’ (**wyf**) rather than “bride” as is the case with weddings. However, we also find the comment, **I love weddings than Marriages 😊** (7), where the wedding is rhetorically constructed as more desirable than marriage. Note the use of the word “love”, a positive evaluation of weddings in contrast to marriage.

In at least four of these comments we find well wishes for the couple in their married life. Note these examples: **best of lucky in her marriage** (8), **may God be the binding glue in their marriage** (9), **may the good Lord bless your Marriage** (10), **I pray God bless... receives "favour" from the Lord** (12). These comments are rooted in Christian beliefs and further function to illustrate that marriage is intertwined with something higher than the individuals involved – God/the Lord. As such, there is a positive correlation between marriage and God, with God seen as crucial in marriage. Note the use of the words **bind**, and **glue** (9), metaphors exemplifying what is inseparable and rendering marriage as something of God, something Godly.

This is consistent with the notion that marriage is more than just a bind between two people but requires anchorage in God for it to have permanence. In fact, since God

is the creator of human beings, Christians also believe that marriage emanates from God. It therefore follows that people would call on the creator to *divorce-proof* marriage by ‘gluing’ couples together. The notion of being ‘bound’ is itself tied to Biblical scripture, “what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Mark 10 verse nine). Invoking this scripture is a plea for God to guarantee permanence as compared to the ephemeral nature of weddings. There is a discourse of Christianity in these comments, with God seen as the ultimate provider of ‘best wishes’ (8).

In addition, whereas TV episodes from which these comments emanate are based on heterosexual weddings of couples, an analysis of pronouns when used in reference to weddings indicates that weddings are events that are tied specifically to the couple or to brides, to the omission of grooms (except the default inclusion by virtue of being part of a couple). Critical discourse scholars Van Leeuwen (2008) and Machin and Mayr (2012) call this phenomena social exclusion. This refers to who or what is missing in discourse when someone else or something else is spotlighted.

Whereas in the comments the couple is mentioned in the context of a wedding through the pronoun **their** (13, 14, 15, 16 see page 150) and whereas brides are also mentioned four times via the pronouns **she** (5), **her** (17), **your** (18), and **you** (19) there are equally four references to grooms through the words ‘**husband**’ (13), ‘**groom**’ (16), and the pronoun ‘**he**’ (18) and ‘**my**’ (20). However, references made exclusively to men do not directly link men to weddings as is the case with brides or couples. For example, consider how the wedding possessively belongs to the couple (13, 14, 15, 16) and to brides (5, 17, 18, 19) and only once possessively to a man – **my own wedding** (20).

Compare the one time possessiveness to these examples, **she probably nagged abt having a wedding** (5), **her wedding** (17) and **a wedding of your dreams** (18).

See comments below:

13. I got a bit emotional when the husband was no where to be found eish the bride just made me tear up, but against all odds they had **their** perfect wedding.

(Noluvo, OPW).

14. At the end it was **their** perfect weddingfinish n klaar happy 4dem (Tshidi,

OPW)

15. That was **their** perfect wedding indeed and they were blessed by rain.

(Tolerance, OPW)

16. The groom seems to have a tendency of disappearing on special days, first was on **their** first date and now on their 1st day of their wedding.(Lorraine, OPW)

17. Criselda is seriously the most beautiful and strong woman I have ever seen and **her** wedding was wow!!! (Faith, TBW)

18. This isnt for TV, m sorry ses' Ratanang, **u** deserve a wedding of **your** dreams. I just hope he'll treat you well even after this disappointment. (Kelebogile, OPW).

19. Halala [**congratulations**] Criselda, **u** deserve your happiness. Yekela abomona!!

(Osborne, TBW).

20. One of the most beautiful sights to behold is that of a man that has found a woman who is a soulmate for him. She is enough for him. He needs no one else and she provides all that he needs. I see it in many couples and pray for that for myself, as a single guy.....i cant wait for **my** own wedding Day!! (Arthur, TBW)

Table 2

Wedding	Bride (Woman)	Couple	Groom (Man)
	4	4	1 possessively 4 (total)

This analysis of the comments illustrates a reproduction of the fixation that the TV programs have with brides and to a lesser extent the couple as a unit, but rarely ever the groom on his own. Facebook users take their cue from the televisual representations and ignore the groom. In the reality TV shows, specifically *Our Perfect Wedding*, it is the women who take charge from wedding planning to the décor elements of the reception. In addition, in comments that reference marriage, besides those that use the words in a neutral fashion, an analysis of the nouns and pronouns illustrates that grooms (10, 11, 12) are specifically tied to marriage more than brides (8) and the couple (4, 6, 9).

Table 3

Marriage	Bride (Woman)	Groom (Man)	Couple
	1	3	3

Generally, marriage involves at least two people. As such, it is not surprising to find couples mentioned in reference to marriage. Noteworthy in these comments is that brides are predominantly tied to weddings more often than to marriage and that men are tied to marriage more often than weddings. This narrative coheres to the hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminist ideologies that construct women as wedding shopaholics with little or no thought of what comes beyond the excessive wedding spending, specifically the marriage. This narrative, assimilated in the comments is repeatedly deployed in the reality TV programs as the programs regularly highlight women

engaged in wedding work that requires money, a moment where men step in to pay as argued by Otnes and Pleck (2003) and Monsarrat (1974). Money becomes a tool that marks gender bifurcation – women spend, men pay. The constrained visibility of men that largely removes them from the public display of consumerism constructs men as saviors more interested in permanence in the form of marriage rather than fleeting weddings.

A number of researchers have noted that women spend excessively for white weddings to ensure white ‘wedding perfection’ (see Engstrom, 2008; 2012). This section demonstrates that there is a relationship between spending and class similar to the coupling of spending with class and elegance as discussed below.

Perfect Weddings: Elegance, Beauty and Class

Thematically, it is unsurprising that a large number of the comments focused on the weddings showcased. To be exact, 20 out of the 40 comments either positively or negatively judge the weddings. These 20 comments are 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18 above and comments 21 to 30 below. These comments that evaluate weddings represent 50 percent of the total comments analyzed.

21. It was indeed a **Perfect wedding!** (Mzikazi, TBW)

22. Wooow **elegant wedding**....(Florence, TBW)

23. **Beautiful wedding!** Looooo♥♥♥ve the dress. (Refiloe, TBW)

24. This **wedding is sad**... looks like a family gathering. (Vanèssà, OPW)

25. This was our **embarasing wedding**. (Dintle, OPW)

26. What a **boring wedfing** [wedding]. (Kholo, OPW)

27. The rain washed every thing this **wedding was a blessing** from god (Buyi, OPW).

The choice of words such as **perfect** (13, 14, 15, 20), **wow** (7, 9, 17, 21), **beautiful** (22), and **blessing** (26) are adjectives that have come to typify the hegemonic neoliberal post-feminist language used in the production and performance of *Top Billing Weddings*.

Similar adjectives are also used in these four comments posted on the *Top Billing Weddings* page.

28. **#Classy** (Onkarabile, TBW).

29. They looked stunning, **nice ceremony** the deco was on point. (Aus'Tebza, TBW)

30. **beautiful** indeed.....am in love with the vanue, where is it? (Mmatshepo, TBW)

Unsurprisingly, weddings featured on *Top Billing Weddings* are positively evaluated (see comments 7,17, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30). In comparison, there is an equal number of comments (2, 3, 4, 6, 18, 24, 25, 26) that negatively judge weddings on *Our Perfect Wedding*. This number of negative comments is more than the four (13,14,15,27) that positively evaluate weddings on this show. This is evidence of a neoliberal based discourse in which those of a higher social class and whose elaborate consumption equates perfection.

Table 4

TV Program	Negative	Positive	Total
Top Billing Weddings	0	8	20
Our Perfect Wedding	8	4	

Chapter Five discussed that in *Top Billing Weddings* brides are not shown engaged in any form of wedding labor as is the case for *Our Perfect Wedding* brides, who are intricately involved in wedding planning and labor such as personally collecting bridal gowns from the stores. This contributes to the idea that weddings are feminine or gendered spaces for brides according to Sniezek (2005). Care is taken in the construction of difference between the two shows such that the celebrity status becomes a signifier of leisure activities other than wedding labor. For this reason, in the case of *Top Billing Weddings*, the audience has no expectation of anything less than a perfect wedding. Yet, *Our Perfect Wedding* brides habitually break down as their wedding plans crumble and their grooms disappear, emphasis areas in the show's representations. This type of representation is done to dramatically set up the audience to anticipate that the wedding may not be perfect after all. It also conforms to the logics of neoliberalism in which those with money can purchase services (of wedding planners and other labors) and in so doing side-step failure.

It follows therefore that weddings of couples in a non-celebrity show with audiences hyped up to either agree or disagree with the show's name based on the series of events are reacted to with words such as **#whiteweddingsmust fall** (2), **trap** (4), **depressing** (6), **not for TV** (18), **sad family gathering** (24), **embarrassing** (25), and **boring** (26) to judge weddings. The discourse structure to support the perception of imperfection is constructed around words such as the ones in bold here. In this sample there are more negative comments, a total of seven compared to the four that are positive. Whereas weddings are generally events of celebration, the negative words used in reference to *Our Perfect Wedding* resist the notion of wedding perfection. In

fact, these words uproot weddings from spaces of fun to the world of gloom. What we see here is that the comments made hinge on the participants' social class, a fulfillment of neoliberal thinking about class norms.

If we consider the examples (13, 14, 15) on page 150 proclaiming the weddings as perfect we also realize that words such as **against all odds** (13) illustrate that the couple have overcome obstacles, evoking empathy and hence, a positive wedding evaluation. The words illustrate a form of justification for the positive evaluation, suggesting that the evaluation is not just based on the wedding but is inspired by compassion.

According to the texts, perfection is also synonymous with '**blessing**'. In two comments (15 on page 150 and 27 on page 153) we see a metaphorical discourse of **rain**. The discourse supports the topos of forgiveness that is associated with perfection. In the context of use, the rain is washing away the mistakes of the groom who previously cheated on the bride and is blessing the couple. The couple is receiving a divine start similar to my suggestion in Chapter Five that white weddings are discursively constructed as a new phase of life. Here too, the rain, from the perspectives of the commentators, emphasizes that which is good. This is supported by the insertion of '**God**' (27).

Overall, the main points here are that celebrity weddings are positively evaluated whereas the positive evaluation of weddings in *Our Perfect Wedding* is inspired by compassion.

Brides, Body Shaming and Bridal Gowns

The attention placed on brides in wedding media has been discussed extensively (Engstrom, 2012) although largely from a global North perspective that has excluded research from the global South, leaving a yawning gap. Analyzing the language used to talk about brides in a post-colonial context is therefore not redundant. In addition, it would be a bad scholarly practice to ignore findings emerging from a study based in the global South because similar findings have been noted in other parts of the world.

The remainder of the comments make up 25 percent of the total data set. In all these comments we find an extensive focus on bridal looks. This bridal scrutiny is an extension of the televisual focus on brides and women's bodies in general. The analysis in this section is based on lexical analysis, word choice specifically.

31. Criselda looked absolutely **stunning** !! (Bianca, TBW)

32. To me it seemed as if she was **popping out of her dress**....shes **well busted** but the dress **didnt compliment** her girls at all...just my opinion...(Diane, TBW)

33. She is **so so beautiful** congratulations ☺☺☺ (Babess, TBW)

34. the bride is **beautiful**.....(Tshepiso, TBW)

35. **Wow love** her dress!! (Germibaby, TBW)

36. **Stunning** dress. (Andiswa, TBW)

37. The bride was **too simple** for me. (Matlhoks, OPW)

38. Makeup was a **disaster**. (Nwabisa, OPW)

39. I know nothing about wedding dresses, but this wedding **dress is a big no!**
(Olufemi, OPW)

40. This **dress is not simple just lazy**. (Fisiwe, OPW)

In the comments sampled above there are two comments that use the words **'beautiful'** (33, 34) and **'stunning'** (31) to positively evaluate brides. In an earlier example (17) we also find the inclusion of the adverb used in its superlative form **'most'** to emphasize the bride's beauty. This is even clearer if we consider the addition of the word **absolutely** (31) also used to overstate the positive assessment. What is interesting is that in the sample analyzed on brides in *Top Billing Weddings*, they are positively judged as beautiful. This is consistent with the overall positive evaluation of weddings featured on *Top Billing Weddings*, a normative fulfillment of class norms.

In the sample above, three comments (32, 37, 38) negatively evaluate the brides featured in the episodes. Consider the phrases **she was popping out of her dress....shes well busted** (32), **too simple** (37) and **disaster** (38). The negative evaluation (32) is targeted at Criselda rather than Siya (the two celebrity brides). Interestingly, Siya is slim while Criselda is not. The words **popping out** (32) literally mean that the bride was bulging out of her dress perhaps because she is fat, an oxymoron according to media representations dominated by thin brides. The intention of the comment is to humiliate the bride because of her body shape and size or what is called body shaming. The ideology underpinning the comment is that brides should not be fat and if fat, should choose gowns that conceal their 'imperfect' bodies. In fact, the comment suggests that fat brides are an outlier, an abnormality that does not fit the hegemonic televisual representation of brides. Ultimately, brides are reduced to their features or what scholars refer to as objectification.

In the media, brides are represented as beautiful, thin and with flowing hair, a stereotypical representation based on narrow White feminine ideal which sets an

impossible standard for brides of different body shapes. The constructed bridal look coupled with the extensive focus on brides' bodies normalizes body surveillance and the act of judging beauty based on body shape. Expanding the reach of reality TV programs to the online space also expands the surveillance of brides. The surveillance by the wedding media also legitimizes critiques by audiences in online spaces. The normalized bridal body surveillance based on ideal beauty standards presented by the wedding media influences the harsh assessments for brides whose appearance deviates from the 'norm' represented in the media.

The extensive focus on the external self as the proper bridal look works within the everyday bombardment about beauty standards to which women are exposed. Media messages suggest that no woman is ever beautiful. This predominant discourse constructs the self as deficient before suggesting products to 'fix' the deficiency. Note the two other comments with the words **too simple** (37 on page 156) and **disaster** (38 on page 156) which also negatively evaluate the brides. Comment 37 on page 156 in particular ties with the post-feminist notion, which Roberts (2007) argues is the construction of the true self, constructed here as a problem that must be hidden or corrected. Within the realm of neoliberalism this narrative works by cultivating self-doubt, which can be corrected through the act of consumption mainly, in this case in the form of make-up as we see with comment 38 (page 156). Engstrom (2012) demonstrates that the wedding media tell women to purchase items essential for their beauty on the wedding day. To create and sustain demand for products, brides are made to believe that they have an inadequate appearance fixable through consumerism (Wicoff, 2006; Otness and Pleck, 2006).

In reference to the two comments (37, 38 see page 156), they suggest that the simplicity of the bride could have been corrected via consumerism by purchasing the right kind of make-up. In other words, bridal beauty comes via spending. The notion of bridal inadequacy fits the neoliberal post-feminist ideal of choosing to spend, which creates a spiral of perpetual spending as non-expenditure returns people to their state of inadequacy (ugliness). The representations about femininity and beauty have been normalized as compulsory, leading women to participate in and perpetuate the same (Thapan, 1995). In this context, wedding media have taught audiences to internalize beliefs about a hegemonic bridal look, a look that is underpinned by excessive consumption. As such, audiences rely on the hegemonic media lessons about bridal appearance in judging beauty, hence the disparaging comments in instances where brides fail to meet the set standard of bridal beauty.

The surveillance on bridal looks also expands to bridal gowns. Seven of the 13 comments in the sample directly reference bridal dresses although one (36, see page 156) is ambiguous and is not clear about whether it is intended to compare the clothes worn by the bride during the two ceremonies. Nonetheless, in the two shows analyzed here brides can be seen trying on their bridal gowns a few days before the weddings. It is at the moment of fitting on her bridal gown that Aletta, one of the *Our Perfect Wedding* brides mentioned in the previous chapter, breaks down as she admires her beauty and reminisces about past relationship disappointments. Of interest in this analysis are the words used to evaluate bridal gowns. In the entire sample we find three positive comments (23, 35, 36) using such words as **love** (23 see pages 152 and 156), **wow love** (35), **stunning** (36) in reference to bridal gowns. These three comments are

made in reference to brides on the celebrity program with only one negative comment (32 see page 156) already analyzed above. These dresses are so “stunning” that they are not liked but “loved” and warrant the inclusion of the ‘heart’ emoticon, which embellishes the ‘love’ feelings.

In sharp contrast, there are no positive comments about bridal gowns worn by brides in *Our Perfect Wedding*. Instead, we find three negative comments - **this dress is a big let down** (11 see page 147), **this wedding dress is a big no!** (39 see page 156), and **this dress is not simple just lazy** (40 see page 156). Bridal gowns are often the highest expenditure items in weddings (Ingraham, 2009; Engstrom, 2012). Yet, the comments seem to indicate that the dresses failed to impress the audience members. Indeed, the hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminist world of consumption and choice does not always result in positive reviews.

Overall, we find more positive comments made about the wedding and bridal gowns on *Top Billing Weddings*, reinforcing the link made earlier between higher social class and positive assessment. This could be because celebrities are liked and are symbols of (money) achievement, an allure for others. Non-celebrity brides, however, are also held to the same standard and heavily critiqued when they fall short.

Grooms: Excluded from Body Shaming

The scrutiny and criticism directed at brides because of their body type and choices in bridal gowns do not extend to the grooms. The hegemonic social exclusion of grooms in televisual representations of white weddings that makes weddings feminine spaces also expands to body surveillance. There are two comments in which grooms are mentioned together with brides in which they are both positively evaluated as **stunning**

(7, see page 147) and (29, see page 153). Besides these two comments that make reference to the couple there is not a single comment that evaluates grooms' looks. This suggests that grooms are exempt from body scrutiny and shaming and are not heavily subjected to body image standards.

Gendered Blame and Gendered Responsibilities

This final section revisits four comments (1, 5, 6, 18, see pages 135, 143, 146, 150). It will demonstrate that these comments construct the wedding as something about which women pester men. That is, they suggest that men ought to give women weddings. This is connected to the normative view that it is generally men who propose marriage. Therefore, a wedding follows from a marriage proposal (made by a man). In this view men are responsible for weddings although they are not represented as the gender that labors for 'perfect' weddings. The comments reproduce the hegemonic narrative that women dream of weddings (Wicoff, 2006) and that it is a man's responsibility to fulfill the dreams.

In the comments analyzed here, specifically in comment (5 see page 143), there is an interesting choice of words: **nagged**. This comment suggests that a white wedding would not happen if women did not "nag" and construct white weddings as events that men do for women, sort of a gift or a responsibility. The rhetoric of men dragged to the altar is also evident in comment (6) the man is represented as a savior who tried to **protect** his wife from public embarrassment. If we stick with the notion of a gift, comment (5) perfectly illustrates that the woman is blamed for forcing a man into 'giving' her a white wedding. Indeed, according to comment (1 see page 135), it is women or **ladies who like to publicly display their lives** (1) and want white weddings even

when **not financially ready** (1). Also consider the comment, **u deserve a wedding of your dreams** (18 see page 150), which coheres to the hegemonic televisual representation of weddings as the stuff of dreams for women rather than for men. Otnes and Pleck (2003), Wallace (2004), Wicoff (2006), Dunak (2013), Alers, Forster, Hill, and Ray (2001) have argued that the wedding media consistently use phrases that paint weddings in a fairytale language and as dreams women have from an early age. In addition, tied to points discussed in Chapter Five white weddings are produced as events that are deserved. Comment 18 (on page 150), in suggesting that the bride **deserves a wedding of her dreams**, reproduces the same narrative.

Chapter summary

Online communication platforms have made it possible for media audiences to talk back to media producers. For researchers, such communication provides insight into the ways in which audiences interpret media texts. As this chapter has shown audiences of wedding reality TV programs simultaneously resist and embrace the messages and values communicated by the TV programs. For example, via Facebook, audiences resist representations of white weddings and call attention to the social dangers of the public display of pseudo wealth.

More importantly, this chapter illustrates an identity trouble within the Black society. For instance, while some Black people embrace the normalized illustrations of hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminist notions of individuality, others use cultural explanations to define correct practices for Black South Africans. Tied to this, these narratives also offer insight into the normative logics of class as wealthy people's conduct is unregulated in the very culture that defines proper conduct for Black people,

suggesting that the wealthy can act as individuals whereas the conduct of those in the lower levels of society ought to be culturally defined.

The next chapter is different from the two previous chapters as it examines non-mediated texts. As indicated in the methodology chapter, data for Chapter Seven was collected during fieldwork conducted in December 2015 in South Africa.

CHAPTER 7

THE LANGUAGE OF WEDDING SPEECHES AND THEIR ROLE IN STRUCTURING MARRIAGE

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the function of two wedding speeches, one at a white wedding and another at a traditional wedding and illustrates that the white wedding speech defines Christian married life structured along gender lines in which the man is the superior being engaged in a performative role of *providing* for the woman, a passive subject for whom a man labors. In a similar vein, a speech given at the traditional wedding illuminates beliefs about African womanhood and manhood and defines gendered responsibilities in ways that elevate the status of the *laboring* African man as an opposite of a subordinate woman existing to be protected and provided for in society. This chapter illustrates that an African man is constructed as a free choosing agent who transgresses gender roles at will, a choice unavailable to an African woman whose *domestic* roles are neatly defined and unchanging. The key point this chapter makes is that Biblical/Christian beliefs and African cultural beliefs converge to normalize women's subordination and male supremacy in the Black South African society. The previous chapters drew attention to tensions between constructions of weddings and marriage, contradictory, this chapter demonstrates harmonious co-existence between discourses of Biblical and African cultural perspectives.

The chapter is organized into three sections. The first section provides important background about wedding speeches in the South African Black society and makes a case for the relevance of their analysis. The second section is an analysis of a speech made at a white wedding ceremony, while the third section analyzes a traditional

wedding speech and contains a sub-section further explaining how African womanhood is defined in the speech in ways that correspond with a definition of African manhood. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary that discusses key points made in the analysis specifically about the construction of women as subordinate and what is clearly a celebration of patriarchy in the Black society. Both speeches are emblematic of speeches made at these events.

Brief Background about Wedding Speeches

Wedding speeches are interesting, specifically those in which the couple receives marriage counsel, a routine feature in wedding events. An analysis of these wedding speeches is conducted with a recognition that in contemporary South Africa people date for a period before getting married. This means the two people getting married already know each other. Also, African anthropologists who have theorized about marriage claim that socialization about marriage begins early in life (Dzobo, 1975). What then necessitates wedding day speeches? As this chapter will show, wedding speeches are an apex of the socialization about marriage life and function to cement beliefs about *doing* marriage. In fact, the large space occupied by speeches in wedding programs and their function in structuring marriage life suggests that the time is apt for more scholarly intervention and analysis. To offer insight into an area largely ignored in media representations and existing literature that deals with weddings, here analysis specifically explores how wedding speeches construct gender and gender roles and in so doing also structure marriage relations and reproduce inequality in society.

Although the white wedding in the South African Black society is a legacy of colonization, the entire wedding process including the white and traditional weddings is

enacted differently from that of White people in the country. This does not mean that similarities do not exist between the white weddings in the two cultures. Indeed, as people interact, cultural practices are emulated, adopted and re-interpreted. This is part of the reason culture is dynamic or the reason we speak of cultural dynamism.

Let me explain some of the ways in which the white wedding in the South African Black society is different from that of White people, at least in South Africa. First, ritualistic elements in white weddings of Black South Africans include a 'step'. A step is a visual display of talent in dance moves. Ahead of the wedding, the grooms' men and bridesmaids meet to practice dance moves that they will perform. These dance moves are often a highlight of the wedding and are performed as the wedding party arrives at the wedding venue for the reception. The bride and groom can also showcase their dance moves as they enter behind *abakhaphi* [the wedding party].

Second, speeches make up almost the entire wedding program of the Black South African white wedding, interspersed only by singing, dancing, and eating. Third, as noted above, the speeches themselves have a formulaic narrative. That is, although each speech²⁹ is intended to present a particular theme or serve a particular purpose, it is similar to the previous and the next in structure. For example, speakers begin by greeting the audience and during the process of giving a speech may cite a Biblical verse with a series of formulaic phrases such as Amen and or Hallelujah, or draw from cultural resources as they offer advice on ensuring a successful marriage. Also, speakers are usually introduced by a song and at the end of the speech, there is more singing. I observed this in the weddings I attended in December 2015 and many other

²⁹ Each wedding program for each type of wedding can have as many as 10 different speeches given by friends, family members, and community members from the bride's side and also from the groom's side. The speeches take up most of each of the wedding processes.

weddings in which I have participated since I was a young girl growing up in Ngxakaxa from the time my mother began socializing my sisters and I into weddings and marriage life.

Speakers asked to give words of wisdom to the couple are often people who are well regarded in society, such as a priest's wife, a long term married person, a wealthy person, a highly educated person and so on. Priests on the other hand are exclusively roped in to conduct preaching, pray and offer blessings, activities they pepper with advice and singing. One unchanging factor is that the speaker who offers guidance is always married. As such, in offering marriage guidance and advice, the speaker often draws from his or her own experience and tells the audience about how she or he has ensured marriage success. The speakers are often asked in advance to speak and their names appear in the printed program, although it is not unusual to make changes to the program on the day or as the proceedings unfold.

Unlike the previous chapters where analysis includes visual investigation, word choice and other linguistic features, this chapter examines what van Dijk (2003) calls the entire meaning or content of discourse by specifically examining word choice, social actors mentioned in the speeches and their associated roles. Similarly, Van Leeuwen (2008) has developed a strategy for analyzing the representation of social actors in language, specifically role allocation. This strategy also examines pronouns and word choice to show how social actors are represented as "saving others" and as those being saved (Van Leeuwen, 1996, p.33). This is important in order to evaluate who is "associated with power or powerful groups in society" (Van Dijk, 2003, p.59). In other words, what is specifically examined are the dominant beliefs that are made to appear

normal. Such beliefs, according to Fairclough (2003), construct and sustain relations of power and exploitation in society. For this reason, focus on words that according to Fairclough (1995, 1997, 2003) reflect existing beliefs and contribute to in the context of this study shaping social beliefs about marriage.

Consistent with the general wedding process, which begins with a white wedding, and the statistical trends that indicate the popularity of white weddings, this chapter begins by analyzing a speech made at a white wedding. The ceremony took place at KwaNgwanya, a village about 30 minutes by car from my own birth place, Ngxakaxa [a rural area named after its river, Ngxakaxa].

The White Wedding Speech: Constructing Christian Married Woman-hood and Manhood

PW, a woman seemingly in her late 50s dressed in an off-white skirt and jacket suit and a red hat belts out the song, *Ungcwele uThixo* [God is holy]. People in the tent/marquee, including the bride and groom rise to their feet and sing along. Many people raise their hands in the air, their eyes closed and bodies rhythmically swaying from side to side. PW lifts up her right hand before energetically clenching it into a fist. The song slows down and stops, guests grab their chairs and sit down.

PW is noted on the program as the speaker giving “words of wisdom” to the couple. She reads two Bible verses, the first from Deuteronomy 24:5 and the second from Ephesians 5:22-30. The first reading:

Deuteronomy 24:5

If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.

The second reading:

Ephesians 5:22-30

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

These two scriptures form the basis of PW's speech. Below is an extract from the speech³⁰:

I read the scripture so that if there was a person who was thinking that she or he intends giving the groom a small job, he (groom) has been given an off, a leave. Hallelujah! There is a year. In our days a honeymoon is only a weekend; in God's ways a (married) man is given leave for a whole a year to make his wife happy. Hallelujah! It is said that there should be nothing else that he does. The only duty that he must be given is to make sure that he makes his wife happy. If there are other things that make Satan

³⁰ PW gave the speech in both English and isiXhosa (my home language). I have translated the speech into English when necessary and have reproduced here only the parts of the speech relevant for this analysis. Parts left out include moments when PW sings and is inaudible in the tape.

happy, for a year there is only one thing that you must do, make your wife happy. Hallelujah!

(inaudible). As God I give you authority to love your wife too much. The Bible says wives submit to your own husbands. It does not say respect all men and submitting is different from respecting. To submit is to lower yourself. You are meant to submit to this one only. The Bible says honor your father and mother but when it comes to a woman it says submit. You are not going to be on top, you will be beneath. The vision has been given to him. You are going to support the vision; you are going to manage the vision. To your husband you must submit. You are a Christian; you know how to submit.

The same way you submit to God is the same way you submit to your husband. If you do not say to God, God I am tired, you cannot say that to your husband. The same way you submit to Christ is the same way God tells you to submit to your husband. When it comes to the husband the Bible says the husband must love his wife the way Christ loved the world and gave himself for the church. If you had R10 that you were going to use to buy water and your wife comes wanting to buy airtime to phone her friends, one of the most menial or insignificant things - to call my friends, but, because the Bible says give all/everything. God says give all/everything even if it means you give yourself. Don't say, I work so hard, sweating – all of that is for her just like Christ died for the church. It is said that give up everything. God says give up, love till you give up what is

yours. As of today, you do not have (inaudible). When I have worked so hard, sweating so much! You are sweating for her. Christ died for the Church.

In the extract above, besides the unnamed person who is instructed to not give the groom work, the first social actor we encounter is a man and in this speech context, the groom referred to using the pronouns ‘he’, ‘his’, and ‘him’. Then, we also find the wife, the ‘she’ also referenced through ‘you’ and ‘your’. What is more important to examine is how these two social actors are represented if we stay grounded in Van Leeuwen’s (1996; 2008) strategy of investigating who is constructed as an agentic “doing” social actor and who is the recipient of the action. Let us examine the word choice that illustrates the actions/non actions of social actors and what these mean for structuring marriage in the table below.

Table 5

Social Actors	Action/Role	Doing or Recipient	Status (inferior/superior)
Him/Man (Groom)	Make his wife happy	Doing	Superior
Her/Woman (Bride)	Being made happy	Recipient	Inferior

Here we find a man duty bound to “**make his wife happy**” repeated at least three times. Repetition is a rhetorical strategy used to assert significance. Audiences, men in particular are not to mistake their role of providing happiness. In this example, word

choice shows us that it is the man who is acting in a role of providing happiness. The woman's role on the other hand is constrained to a recipient position, acting to receive the happiness. This is presented as a natural Biblical fact. Also consider this example in the table below:

Table 6

Social Actors	Action/Role	Doing or Recipient	Status (inferior/superior)
Him/Man (Groom)	Love your wife too much	Doing	Superior
Her/Woman (Bride)	Being loved too much	Recipient	Inferior

In this example too, a man is doing while a woman is receiving. The actions here lowers the woman's social position. Here, a man is "loving" his wife, a point repeated twice in the speech. While it would appear that the woman is at the center since she is to be made happy and loved, nothing else is mentioned about her except her docile function of receiving – something is being done for or to her. She is not the one doing, nor does it seem that roles are interchangeable. See table below.

Table 7

Social Actors	Action/Role	Doing or Recipient	Status (inferior/superior)
Him/Man (Groom)	Give all/everything Give yourself	Doing	Superior

	Give money (R10)		
Her/Woman (Bride)	Being given (something)	Recipient	Inferior

Table seven shows the same pattern. Men are represented as social actors who “give” including giving money. The inclusion of money is important and requires analysis as it further objectifies women as dependents. Although PW makes an example about R10 (less than \$1), money has a metaphorical function here. It is a man who provides the money and a woman who spends it. This further entrenches the idea of a dependent woman while men’s social status remains intact and elevated. Also interesting are the choices in examples that PW makes. For instance, whereas the man “sweats” for the money and whereas the man would have used the money for something as important as “water”, the woman spends the money on “airtime³¹ phoning friends. Both water and airtime are metaphors. If we juxtapose the two we find that one (water) is a need, something significant whereas the other (airtime) is trivial. Also interesting is how water, something humans need for basic survival is associated with men while airtime, something trivial is used in reference to women. In fact, in the original text in isiXhosa, PW is empathic in making the example for she says, “airtime *into engemsebenzi* [an insignificant/unnecessary thing].

The word “sweat” is also fascinating because it illustrates that men labor. Comparatively, there is no mention of women laboring. The idea of a laboring man reinforces the idea of a man who provides (for a woman who only receives). This also works within the larger representation of men as financiers of weddings as discussed in

³¹ Credit to make calls and send text messages.

Chapters Five and Six, a representation that connects women to excessive spending (spending money for which they do not labor). Although in contemporary South African life both men and women work and are considered equal in the eyes of the law, in the marriage institution we find a production of inequality in which men are represented as providers. Women on the other hand are repeatedly represented as recipients, something Corson (1997) has long found to be another form of women's oppression.

In this speech there are instances in which women are active social actors. Consider the example below:

Table 8

Social Actors	Action/Role	Doing or Recipient	Status (inferior/superior)
Her/Woman (Bride)	Submit to your husband	Doing	Inferior
Him/Man (Groom)	Being submitted to	Recipient	Superior

Glaring in this example is how a woman although an agent actively doing something, her status remains intact – inferior. The word “**submit**” is repeated 10 times in the speech and coheres to the normative narrative of gender inequality. In society people often submit to those who are higher or superior. In other words, PW represents men as superior to women. By telling women to “**submit**” men's position remains elevated – a contrast with the subordination of women. Two other active verbs are interesting. See the table below.

Table 9

Social Actors	Action/Role	Doing or Recipient	Status (inferior/superior)
Her/Woman (Bride)	Support the vision	Doing	Inferior
	Manage the vision	Doing	Inferior

The word, “**manage**” gives an illusion of superiority. A manager is generally someone who is in charge. However, in this context the woman while constructed as in charge is “**managing**” her husband’s vision and at no point are we told of a woman having her own vision. In fact, when I briefly interviewed PW after the speech together with her husband they explained that God gives visions to men rather than women. As in the speech, PW also explained that a woman’s role is to “**support**” her husband. As such, “**manage**” is not used to elevate a woman’s status above that of a man. The word, “**support**” further illustrates this point about an inferior status. In fact, submission is further explained as “**being under him, serving his vision.**” In other words, women do not lead but “**support**” the leadership of men. Together, the two active verbs, “**manage**” and “**support**” seem to function as synonyms to refer to a person who provides assistance. Women fade to the background, following and supporting men without ceasing. If we consider that language is a social practice and a vehicle for transmitting beliefs then we realize that gender roles are consistently represented as stable. Africana womanists argue differently and suggest that gender roles are flexible

(Hudson-Weems, 1998; 2003). However, according to PW, herself a woman, and the scriptures cited, gender roles are fenced, inflexible and stable.

The two scriptures, Deuteronomy 24:5 and Ephesians 5:22-30 on page 169 obligate superior Christian maleness and inferior Christian femaleness based on a neat division in gender roles. What we find are two things, the first is that men do and women are done to and the second is that even when women do something, they act to support men. From the scriptures it is clear who provides and who is superior compared to who is a recipient and has a stable inferior status. The Bible or at least the scriptures analyzed here seem to be written from a male perspective and represent a patriarchal ideology. It is this same ideology that is accepted, supported and transmitted by a woman in representing women as paralytic subjects. Whether intended or accidental, advice given to a marrying couple hinges on inequality in a way that constructs marriage life as a union of unequal people.

What do we learn from a wedding speech given at a traditional wedding by a man, and, are there similarities between these two speeches given by people of different genders at two differently inspired wedding ceremonies?

Constructing African Womanhood: The Traditional Wedding

It is about midday, and the traditional wedding set to start at 10:30am has not yet begun. The sun is out although it keeps disappearing among the clouds making it a warm (perhaps 70 degrees Fahrenheit) rather than a hot December day (ranging in the 90 degrees Fahrenheit zone). My eyes struggle to adjust as I walk into an unlit hut. I cannot make out what is happening inside although I can hear singing and feet stomping the ground. When my eyes finally adjust to the dimness of the room I spot my

sister as she joins a group of women dancing in a circle around the hut. The singing and dancing stops abruptly and the women all shuffle in the same direction, to the right side of the hut (to the side where the door opens). The women find spots to sit while some remain standing since there are not enough chairs. I also stand. Men sit on the left side of the door separated from the women. The oldest man is sitting on a plastic chair closest to the door while the youngest man squats under the only window on the left side of the room. The table at the top center of the room directly facing the door separates women from men. There is no gender mixing. A man begins addressing the room.

I begin this section by sketching out this scene because the speech examined here in so many ways embodies gender division in the Black South African society. This section continues to grapple with the ways in which the narratives presented as marriage advice intended to ensure marriage success hinge on gender inequality. As discussed in the previous section, marriage is represented as a union of unequal individuals with women cast in a subordinate position while hegemonic male superiority is advanced.

To show the gendered understandings of marriage analysis focuses on word choice based on a speech given at the traditional wedding ceremony, the same ceremony referenced in the field notes extract above. This section will demonstrate that whereas in the white wedding speech Biblical teachings moderate the advice, in this traditional wedding speech, it is predominantly African cultural beliefs that work to construct and represent men as superior.

In addition, the speech analyzed here defines African womanhood as a corollary to African manhood. In other words the speech works to indirectly define a *woman's inferior place* by directly defining a *man's superior role* through gendered narratives premised on *what to* and *what not to do* as an African man. In the wedding program the speech is titled *Kukuthini ukuba ngumyeni* [what does it mean to be a married man].

The speech and analysis based on word choice begins below.

Physiology, Responsibility and Leadership: African Manhood

A man much taller than the Master of Ceremonies (MC), perhaps over six feet, raises his hand and the singing and ululation dies down and stops. This man whom from this point on I will refer to as Maye is dressed in a white shirt (the type generally worn by men in traditional celebrations with colorful prints often of animals, huts, images of the late *utata*³² uNelson Mandela's³³ face and many other creations appreciated by Africans). Maye, noted in the program and already introduced by the MC introduces himself, tells the audience that he will not talk for long and then says:

Be a traditional man. Being a traditional man means implement discipline. But do not be stubborn. Other men are women's puppets. In reality, it will seem as if we are scared of women. That's just wrong, period! And all the while you are wearing an apron. No one does that to me. That is not the practice in my own house. Don't take turns with your wife. That does not mean that when I think/feel like it I will not cook for my children, let them eat and be merry but, that is not my responsibility/job.

³² The word *tata* means father. It does not translate well to Mr. I prefer using *tata* than Mr to show respect.

³³ The first democratically elected South African president who led from 1994 until 1997 and later died in 2013. He had spent 27 years in jail for fighting against White oppression.

Do not carry children on your back, never do that. But when the circumstances warrant (inaudible).

As a man, ensure that your wife and children have eaten. That your children go to school. Have a marriage centered on Christian beliefs. Be a role model. Eat well, exercise and stay healthy. Don't depend on alcohol, that's not marriage.

A woman's brain is dissimilar to yours or does not work the same as yours. That means you must adjust. Share, there is no individuality, no individual items but things that belong to the both of you. If you conduct yourself as an individual, God is able to take his things from you.

One other thing you must not do is to undermine the Church. Even if it is during the preaching time you must not be disrespectful just because you have material possessions. I do not like that. It exhausts me to see people who were born and raised in the Church but (inaudible) disrespecting the Church.

When there is something that requires money, even if it's your brother who needs the money consult your wife. Before you do anything please don't let that interfere with her. Protect your wife from your parents and sisters. If your father or your mother ask for money tell them that you do not have it. If there is a project that you are both going to do, do not say I am going to consult my wife first because when you go back to your family and you are unable to give them the money to your family it will be as if she is the one who said you must not help out. If you do that you

would have ruined your marriage. So, never do that. Do not include your wife in your program in case she becomes the one who is blamed (inaudible). If you do that, you will be ruining your marriage.

Don't be jealous of your wife. You will embarrass yourself and disappoint me. Being jealous of your wife is something low. She grew up with people (inaudible). She went to school with people and she has lived and had her happiness with different people. She is not going to suddenly know no-one. You would have disappointed me.

Marriage is no place for foolhardiness; it's a place of fun. So, take your wife out.

Although Maye is offering advice to the groom and in so doing defining African masculinity in marriage, he is also indirectly defining African womanhood. The definitional language is apparent in the *Dos* and *Don'ts* laid out for men. The *Dos* and *Don'ts* are a form of binary in the gender language that exemplifies "culturally conditioned gender traits" used to justify male supremacy and women's subordination in society (Wodak, 1997, p.2). In the example below, these cultural explanations are presented as unchangeable facts and demonstrate the *Dos* that are used to define African masculinity.

Table 10

Social Actor	Word Choice (The Dos)
Man	Be a traditional man Implement discipline Be a role model

	Eat well, exercise and stay healthy
--	-------------------------------------

The *Dos* describe (necessary) ingredients in the constitution of African manhood. For example, an African married man is “**traditional**”, and well-built (**eats well and exercises**). The word ‘**traditional**’ is used to imply a practice that is normative, African and long standing and cannot be altered. In the social construction of gender identity, the physiological trait that results from good nutrition and exercise works as a form of embodied power that produces men as normative leaders. This is clearer in the words “**be a role model**,” words that illustrate a critical component in the cultural construction of men’s prowess. Together these words including the idea of “**implementing discipline**” work within the general representation of men as legitimate leaders.

Within an African cultural setting, physiology is tied with the cultural recognition of men as protectors as argued by both African feminists (Steady, 1987) and Africana womanists (Hudson-Weems, 2003). In the example below, we find a naturalized stereotypical representation of men as providers and protectors. This is similar to the advice given during the white wedding speech.

Table 11

Social Actor	Word Choice (The Dos)
Man	<p>Ensure that your wife and children have eaten</p> <p>Protect your wife</p> <p>Take your wife out [for a meal/nice time]</p> <p>[Ensure] That your children go to school</p> <p>Share</p>

In this patriarchal arrangement, men's status is intact and eminent. In the above example, first, men "**protect**" and provide food and entertainment and are overall in charge of women and children's daily lives. In other words, women and children are lumped together as men's dependents. Second, the language of provision notable in the words "**ensure that**" describes marriage as an institution in which survival depends on men's ability to provide. Such beliefs place men on the top bar of the social hierarchy while placing women on the bottom of the ladder.

Further, economic success is made to appear as something that depends on men. Consider how in the above examples we also find men 'doing' (providing) for women and children. This furthers the association of men with labor (as discussed in the earlier section). In such setups, women are subjects for which men labor. Such perspectives foreground male strength and economic achievement via labor as elements that do not co-exist with female strength. Instead, there is a binary - a strong man exists as the opposite of a weak woman, a subject in a man's world. It is as if an equally strong or capable woman who provides would be taking over a man's role.

Similarly, within the discourse of men providing, the advice about "**sharing**" portrays men as superior. "**Sharing**" follows laboring. In this text, it is a man who labors and therefore has something to "**share**" with the woman who receives. The goal of the *Dos* in this speech seems to be to safeguard marriage. As such, not sharing would likely result in conflict and ruin marriage. The insertion of "**God**" further cautions the man to *do* right. In this example, Maye also draws from the African cultural beliefs of *Ubuntu* or humanity in which individuality is shunned. Individuality here is constructed as

something bad and a married man who conducts himself as an individual is likely to be punished by “**God**.” This construction is linked with the high context nature of the culture of Africans in which collective prosperity trumps individual success (Moemeka, 1989). Successful marriage, it seems is mediated by collectivism as opposed to individuality. This is an example of how Biblical beliefs of a supreme “**God**” who punishes those who stray from the righteous path and African cultural values about collectivism converge to structure marriage conduct.

The analysis also demonstrates that in the hegemonic construction of the African male there are also *Don'ts* – what a man should not do, as per the prescriptive words in the example below.

Table 12

Social Actor	Word Choice (The Don'ts)
Man	Don't take turns with your wife Do not carry children on your back; never do that, its wrong period! Do not depend on alcohol Do not be jealous You must not undermine the Church You must not be disrespectful Don't let that interfere with her Do not say I am going to consult my wife Do not include your wife in your program

In the table above, specifically the suggestions, “**Don’t take turns with your wife**” and “**Do not carry children on your back; never do that, its wrong period!**”, there is an unambiguous gendered language, something Africana womanists in relation to women see as women assenting to traditional gender roles. What we find is a demarcation of gender roles neatly defining what is not manly and by inference feminine. In addition, the words, “**never do that**” and “**it’s wrong, period!**” function as further safeguards against feminizing African men, something Africana womanists argue is acceptable to African women who accept their “traditional roles to some degree” (Hudson-Weems, 2004, p.64). This also runs contrary to the arguments made by African feminists about male/female relations which they argue should not be seen as a superior male and a subordinate female (Steady, 1987). However, the data here illustrate something different as what is evident is a superior male and a subordinate female.

The idea of setting up precautions to prevent the feminization of African men is also clear in the use of the phrases “**women’s puppets**” and “**afraid of women**” implying that first, male strength should remain intact and second, that there are men who have become emasculated and are controlled by women. These words and the two other cautions about intoxication and jealousy add emphasis on the proper way of maintaining hegemonic masculinity by setting a boundary that separates what is manly from femininity.

The inclusion of the ‘**apron**’ in the speech warrants analysis. Just like carrying children on the back and cooking are roles ‘generally’ associated with and fulfilled by women, an apron is also considered a feminine item in the African culture and

associated with housework - a metaphor for womanhood. In the Black society in South Africa an apron is part of the new clothes and homeware a girl leaving home is given. Men on the other hand are not given an apron.

Two other examples in the table above, “**You must not undermine the Church**” and “**You must not be disrespectful**” again illustrate the point about the convergence of Biblical perspectives via the Church and African beliefs about respect. Africans place a high premium on respect for elders and the culture (Hudson-Weems, 1993; 2004; 2012). Moemeka (1989) also argues that in the African culture people in positions of authority are respected and that older people are treated with dignity and respect (p.4-8).

Correspondingly, the Church receives the same treatment of “**not being undermined.**” In fact, Maye talks about how “**it exhausts him to see people disrespecting the Church.**” Here a married man is both African and Christian, an identity that is built on respect, a feature that is represented as important in securing enduring marriage.

The last three *Don'ts*, **Don't let that interfere with her**, “**Do not say I am going to consult my wife**”, and “**Do not include your wife in your program**” appear to be premised on protecting wives. In the list of *Dos*, the husband is also told to “**protect his wife from her new family**,” the husband's family. Protection in this case does not fall into the category of portraying women as weak and inferior. Instead, there is goodwill intended to shield women from potential family squabbles.

The prescriptive *Dos* and *Don'ts* come together to do define hegemonic African masculinity. This type of masculinity is premised on male physiology and labor

intersecting to indirectly illuminate what is feminine as illustrated in the table below. The example below sketches out roles that are associated with women since these are a misfit in the painted picture of masculinity.

Table13

Social Actor	Word Choice (The Dos)
Woman	Carry children on her back Cooks Wears an apron

In these roles women are not subjects for whom something is done but are active and doing. It is these domestic roles that are celebrated by Africana womanists, specifically the idea of women rearing children (Hudson-Weems, 2003), and the predominant existence of women in a kitchen space (see Muwati and Gambahaya, 2012). In fact, as discussed in Chapter Three, Muwati and Gamahaya (2012) challenge the notion of the private space/kitchen as oppressive, (something which) contradicts early feminist thinking. Writing about African marriage, Dzobo (1975) associates cooking with women and explains that from an early age girls are taught to cook, feed and ensure their husband's cleanliness (p.46).

These roles are associated with what Mackintosh (1984) calls women's work and are not associated with economic prosperity. Connecting work to these types of roles stabilizes their inferior social position while naturalizing male dominance and gender inequality. It is from these roles that Maye distances men. Indeed, in the Black society in South Africa it is women who are given aprons when they leave home to be married; it

is women who carry children on their backs to free their hands such that they can get on with other daily tasks within and outside the home and it is also women who do most of the cooking in social gatherings such as weddings.

In addition, what is apparent here is that African women are not self-naming or self-defining as asserted through Africana womanism. The word 'self' in Africana womanism's "self-namer" and "self-definer" is therefore misleading as it mislabels the African cultural practice of for instance, newly married Black South African women being named by their new families, a long standing practice. In fact, what we find here are women whose names and roles are culturally defined rather than something women *self* choose.

While the analysis points to a language that structures strict gender roles, prescribes *how to do* marriage, and also defines African masculinity there are aspects of the speech that require complicating. Failure to complicate the analysis leads to a narrow and straightforward understanding of the African marriage arrangement as just patriarchal. Yet, this speech also illuminates areas of liberal beliefs, however muted. Consider the example below:

Table 14

Social Actor	Word Choice
Man	<p>That does not mean that when I think/feel like it I will not cook for my children, let them eat and be merry</p> <p>Consult your wife</p> <p>Protect your wife</p> <p>Share</p>

	Adjust
--	---------------

In the first line of the above example there is gender role flexibility and concern for the family rather than the individual (see Hudson-Weems, 1998; 2003 for a discussion on gender role flexibility and importance of family). However, it is the husband who transgresses the gender roles and “**cooks**,” a domestic activity largely associated with women.

Africana womanists argue that when men work “in concert” with women the goal is to ensure family survival (Hudson-Weems, 1998; 2004). Based on table 11 above I have discussed the points about “**sharing**” and “**protection**” as seen on table 12. To that discussion let us examine the idea of “**consultation**” and “**adjust**” as shown on table 14. Consultation and adjust run counter to the language of male dominance and inequality. Instead these examples elucidate concern for marriage success built on harmonious relations within the family structure. The idea is to reconcile misunderstandings patiently with a man shifting from his original viewpoints to accommodate ideas suggested by the wife with the goal of relationship maintenance. This is consistent with the Africana womanist value of family concern (see Hudson-Weems, 1998).

However, even in this understanding of gender role flexibility there is an underlying nuance of male superiority. For instance, Maye says, “that does not mean that **when I think/feel like it** I will not **cook** for my children, let them eat and be merry.” **but, that is not my responsibility/job.**” Gender roles are defined through what is “**not**” a man’s “**responsibility**,” thus making it a woman’s responsibility. A man performs this

responsibility as a choice. In addition, a man is again laboring and active not for himself but for 'others' – his children. There is no similar language used in reference to choices women have. The African man therefore has flexibility and choices that he exercises at will, contrary to his African woman. Despite this muted progressive departure from strict gender roles, the speech still espouses heteronormative gender roles represented as a marker of beliefs that are both African and Biblical.

Overall, there are more similarities in these speeches than differences. The key point in this chapter is that the African culture and the Bible converge to define African manhood and womanhood. Biblical and cultural explanations are used to help sustain male dominance and women's subordination. In this way gender inequality is reproduced in marriage and in society in general.

The question is what African feminists and African womanists mean by male/female compatibility and gender flexibility in African contexts when texts like those analyzed here paint a picture of a docile African woman whose identity is culturally defined. This African woman's status is much lower than that of her African male counterpart. If according to African womanists and African feminists gender role fencing came with colonization on the African soil, how then do Africans negotiate superior African manhood that is represented as part of the African culture if that is itself foreign? These questions are important as Africans continue to grapple with the decolonial project. In answering questions about what is inherently African and what celebrates European imperialism these perspectives cannot be dismissed particularly in South African and continent wide conversations where groups of Black people navigate their identity in a global contemporary world.

Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrates that while wedding speeches are given in celebratory events, their ideological power should not be underestimated. Following from Chapter Six, this chapter further illustrates that marriage is associated with men since a lot of responsibility is placed on men to protect and provide for their wives. This is the practice not just in wedding media representations as discussed in Chapter Five but also in the narratives of the TV program audiences (see Chapter Six). As we can see from this chapter, despite the speeches being given by people of different genders, the language used entrenches hegemonic masculine superiority. This is the case whether advice is underpinned by Biblical scriptures or African cultural explanations.

As demonstrated, Biblical verses center on female subordination in the form of the term “**submit**” and male dominance in the form of “**provider and protector.**” This is similar to the finding about a traditional wedding speech, which advises the same. In fact, there is close proximity between the Biblical teachings and what is represented as African traditional beliefs, specifically in relation to gender issues. In all the texts examined, women are represented as inferior objects for and to whom something is done whereas men are represented as superior. Even when women are “doing” (submit, manage and support) they do so in support of men.

Categorically, both speeches communicate *women’s silence* and subordination, which means that the social hierarchal arrangement in the Black society in South Africa still privileges men. Male strength and protection are represented as positive benefits for women and children. Marriage success hinges on the appreciation and maintenance of African masculinity as a corollary to African femininity in which one is supreme while the

other is subordinated. This contradicts the Africana womanism notions of flexible gender roles and female and male participation. Instead, gender symbolism via subordination is implicated strongly in the articulation of African womanhood.

The gendered advice given is premised on inequality despite values of equality espoused in the South African Constitution. This suggests that the language of gender equality has not yet translated and is not influential in shaping beliefs about African and Christian marriages, which as discussed here normalize gendered roles that spearhead hegemonic masculinity.

Although this chapter makes an important contribution to literature that deals with issues of gender, one limitation is that data analyzed here excludes interviews with married people and wedding day speakers. Such an inclusion would expand knowledge into the interpretations married people and people who have been wedding day speakers make of the wedding speeches and beliefs communicated. Without this, African marriage appears oppressive to women, which may be a misinterpretation of the nitty-gritties of everyday life in a culture that has predominantly been oppressed on the basis of race and class. This is by no means a denial of male dominance (something demonstrated in the analysis) However, patriarchy may not be the full story of the phenomena of African marriage life, a subject for future research.

Finally, what we see is a conflict between on one hand, individuality and women's empowerment as articulated through post-feminist narratives (as discussed in Chapter Five) and an identity defined by the culture as explained by Africana womanists. Whereas television broadcasts images of women represented as individuals making choices, in this chapter what we find are women who do not make choices as

this role is fulfilled by the culture that defines their identity. As such, contemporary values via neoliberalism and post-feminism represented as attractive to Black people through the television medium clash with African cultural values of prescribing proper African manhood and womanhood. What this chapter illustrates is that both men and women in the Black South African society are in an identity struggle confronted with divergent perspectives of modern living while seemingly attempting to shape their lives according to what has long been defined as inherent Black cultural practices.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This study examined how imported perspectives interact with inherent African cultural values and group norms. The study further investigated how social hierarchies contribute to shaping the Black identity in contemporary South Africa. Using literature about weddings and marriage as well as concepts of hegemony, neoliberalism, post-feminism and Africana womanism and methodologically drawing from multi-modal critical discourse analysis, three research questions were explored. These questions specifically investigated the function of media representations about weddings in weddings reality television and how audiences engage with the representations on Facebook where the wedding TV programs invite audience participation. It was also necessary to examine the construction of African womanhood and manhood through wedding speeches.

The three different facets tackled in this study contribute knowledge to the larger field of mass media, sociology and culture. Consider how this study found that Black people are negotiating their lives in a space where their identity is on the one hand constructed from a hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminist perspective via the television medium. On the other hand, the Black identity is shaped by notions of 'proper' African womanhood and manhood avowed in societal weddings. These ideas about proper Africanhood are articulated in accordance with the African culture and noted by Africana womanists.

To illustrate this finding the following three points are important. First, the two wedding reality TV shows broadcast in South Africa, *Our Perfect Wedding* and *Top*

Billing Weddings function as vehicles that normalize contemporary values of individuality that hinge on consumerism while largely displacing African cultural practices and representing Black feminine looks as inferior. Whereas practices and appearances moderated by whiteness are represented as beautiful, modern and normative, Blackness is either mainstreamed, confined to one class or discarded. Overwhelmingly, race and class hierarchies interact to erase the African culture and Black looks.

It is important to note that the inferior televisual representation of the African culture and Blackness is not independent from the larger inequalities that play out in society such as the hegemony enjoyed by English. Although there are 11 official languages in South Africa, English is the language of instruction in schools and the predominant language of conducting business in the country. Consequently, the class based ideology prevalent in televisual representations of Black people is not disconnected from the logics of representing whiteness as better.

Reality TV shows are a growing television genre in South Africa, and this study is one of the first in critically engaging with this television genre. The popularity of these shows warrants scholarly attention especially since these TV programs tend to emulate popular foreign TV content although they are broadcast to an African audience that has dissimilar cultural beliefs and practices. In addition, while weddings and conversations about these events are short term, facets of these celebrations are longer lasting and impact ideologies and the organization of not just marriage but social life in general. Studying these events fulfills the critical discourse analysis goals of interrupting normalized social wrongs. In the context of this study, such social wrongs are easy to

miss since they play out in benign events that are largely understood to be spaces of jubilation.

Second, emerging from an analysis of the TV shows' audiences, this study found that there are Black people who embrace the high class televisual representations while others challenge these representations. This embrace of hegemonic neoliberal and post-feminist notions is in tension with calls for a *return* to the African culture and an appreciation of Blackness via traditional weddings. The call is similar to that made by Africana womanists of placing the African culture at the center of African conduct. The call by some Black people illustrates a resistance to the television representations as these are seen to be displacing and *inferiorizing* Blackness. This demonstrates a race in search of an identity confronted with divergent perspectives and illustrates a nostalgia for Blackness.

Third, there is a further contradiction between representations that embed post-feminist notions and those that signify Africana womanist perspectives especially in relation to women. These contradictions are evident in the representations of women in the media as empowered consumers who actively make choices while African cultural teachings illustrate the Africana womanist idea of a culturally defined female identity. African womanhood is therefore not a choice African women make but this identity is a group based determination made in accordance with the norms of the Black culture.

Overall, this study demonstrated that Black people are engaged in a process of searching for an identity in modern day South Africa. The texts analyzed clearly demonstrate that weddings are sites where this struggle can be seen in action. The intersection at which Black people find themselves appears like this: On the one hand,

televisual representations largely showcase a race engaged in neoliberal and post-feminist endeavors of high spending with independent empowered women making choices while exuding confidence in elegant body hugging bridal gowns.

On the other hand, Christian beliefs understood to have been introduced to Black South Africans by colonizers which strongly resemble what is considered inherently African, paint a different picture. In this picture, the language that assimilates itself to cultural and Christian explanations presented as marriage advice teaches hegemonic male superiority and women's subordination. In other words, Biblical teachings and African perspectives converge to normalize inequality in the Black society. This is contrary to the ideals of women's empowerment and independence elaborated through post-feminist perspectives. Yet, this perspective is consistent with Africana womanist view about the celebration of male superiority in the Black culture. As such, we also see a race that stresses patriarchy in which African manhood strongly balances on the back of subordinate African womanhood.

What Black people require is an identity that does not embrace neoliberal views at the expense of discarding useful African cultural values. Such an identity would allow for an acknowledgement of the oppressive elements of the African culture and Christian views that construct the male figure as superior to the female, thus contributing to inequality in society. For example, the normalized gender inequality in the South African Black society that runs parallel to constitutional narratives of gender equality would be discussed and critiqued. However, for the moment the identity burden faced by Black South Africans as they navigate the contradictions presented by imported neoliberal and post-feminist perspectives which are dissimilar to African cultural values and practices

demonstrates the ways in which imported perspectives impact local identities placing culture squarely against what is represented as modern and attractive.

A final word about the two gender specific theories used in this study, Africana womanism and post-feminism, is necessary. Neither theory adequately addresses a modern African female identity. Post-feminism does not address issues of culture but is well placed in spotlighting consumerism and pseudo empowerment. In addressing the African culture, Africana womanism relies on broad terminology that is not clearly spelt out. Consider these examples: “flexible roles”, “indistinguishable” roles, and “strength” as articulated by Hudson-Weems (2004, p.64, 66). African womanism is also vague in its articulations about how gender role flexibility functions and in what ways African women self-name and self-define. The theory glances over these peculiarities and does not critically engage with or challenge problematic aspects of the African culture. The vagueness presents a challenge as the theory also does not help to resolve the problems of media representations that de-emphasize the African culture while emphasizing class and race hierarchies.

In spaces such as South Africa where life is becoming more contemporary even as people attempt to hold on to their culture, the applicability of Africana womanism will narrow further if the theory is not updated. While the theory is attractive for making a call for an appreciation of the African culture in studies about African women, the theory requires rigorous updating to maintain relevance. As it stands, Africana womanism is losing bearing in the modern world and will continue that path as the dynamic Black (female) identity consistently modifies itself, influenced by various perspectives and processes including a globalizing world while still retaining certain African cultural views.

In the absence of an updated theory, a new theory that necessarily navigates the space between post-feminism and Africana womanism and other theories relevant in contemporary African spaces is needed. Such a theory would consider the histories of African people while recognizing that culture is dynamic. The emergent theory would open up space for Africans to self-critique as they navigate the de-colonial path in a global world. In using such a theory, Black South Africans could for instance, examine what gender equality means for them and how such a perspective interacts with avowed superior African manhood and how that translates in everyday life.

To conclude, I think back to where I began to the time when my mother called my name to remind us, her daughters to hurry to weddings. I went to the wedding and many others only to return more befuddled than before my mother's calls. Here I am now, standing in front of a mirror. I do not recognize myself – multiple identities, uncoordinated color clothes in my closet. I strip naked to search, thirsting to find with the hope of *becoming dressed* and appropriate. I am weighed down and hesitant from being yelled at by multiple opposing voices. Sometimes these voices morph into images. One image has my face, the other glitters too much, blinding almost. While I search, I am still a Black married South African woman whose identity is largely culturally defined. The African culture, thinning from being scraped, shrinking from being squashed and like the movement of an earthworm contracts momentarily only to lengthen again, its tiny bristles clawing the surface. At times, these bristles scrape and scar my skin, I do not like that. In the moments of contraction as I nurse my scars, imperial values moderated by whiteness appear attractive and liberating. I resist these values because I can self-

identity, I tell myself. For the moment though, like many Black South Africans, as I search in the hope of *becoming*, *I am naked*.

REFERENCES

- Aidoo, A. A. (1998). The African woman today. In O. Nnaemeka, (Ed.), *Sisterhood, feminisms and power: From Africa to the diaspora* (pp.39-50). New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc.
- Aina, O. I. (1998). African women at the grassroots: The silent partners of the women's movement. In O. Nnaemeka (Ed.) , *Sisterhood, feminisms and power: From Africa to the diaspora* (pp.65-88). Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc.
- Akbar, N. (1984). *Chains and images of psychological slavery*. New Jersey: New Mind Productions.
- Alers, R., Forster, G., Hill, D., & Ray, F. (2001). *Going to the Chapel*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Alexander-Floyd, N. G., and Simien, E. M. (2006). Revisiting" what's in a name?": Exploring the contours of Africana womanist thought. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 27(1), 67-89.
- Ani, M. (2000). *Yurugu: An African-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*. 1994. Trenton, NJ: Africa World P.
- Asante, M. K. (2007). *An afrocentric manifesto: toward an African renaissance*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bádéjo, D. L. (1998). African feminism: Mythical and social power of women of African descent. *Research in African literatures*, 29 (2), 94-111.
- Bambacas, C. (2002). Thinking about white weddings. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 26 (72), 191-200.

- Bargh, M. (2001). Romance and resistance in the Pacific: Neoliberalism and indigenous resistance in the Pacific. *Revue Juridique Polynésienne*, 1(118), 251-274.
- Bargh, M. (2007). *Resistance: An indigenous response to neoliberalism*. New Zealand: Huia Publishers.
- Bignell, J. (2005). *Big Brother: Reality TV in the twenty-first century*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Biko, S. (1978). *I write what I like*. Canada: Hienemann Educational Books Inc.
- Boafo, S. K. (Ed.). (1989). *Communication and culture: African perspectives*. Africa Region: WACC.
- Boden, S. (2001). 'Superbrides': Wedding Consumer Culture and the Construction of Bridal Identity. *Sociological Research Online*, 6 (1), 62-82.
- Bonner, F. (2003). *Ordinary television: Analyzing popular TV*. London: Sage.
- Brooks, A. (1997). *Postfeminisms: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Forms*. New York: Routledge.
- Chávez, C. (2015). *Reinventing the Latino Television Viewer: Language, Ideology, and Practice*. New York, NY: Lexington Books.
- Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The creating of the Mods and Rockers*. London: MacGibbon and Kee.
- Coppock, V., Haydon, D., & Richter, I. (1995). *The Illusions of 'Post-Feminism': New Women, Old Myths*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Corson, D. (1997). Gender, discourse and senior education: Ligatures for girls, options for boys. *Gender and discourse*, 140-164.

- Couldry, N. (2004). *Teaching us to fake it: The ritualized norms of television's "reality" games* (pp. 57-74). New York: New York University Press.
- Deery, J. (2015). *Reality T: Key concepts in media and cultural studies*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Dunak, K. M. (2013). *As long as we both shall love: The white wedding in postwar America*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Duncan, J., & Seleokane, M. (1998). *Media and democracy in South Africa*. HSRC Press.
- Dutta, M. J. (2012). *Voices of resistance: Communication and social change*. Indiana: Purdue University Press.
- Dzobo, N. K. (1975). *African Marriage, Right Or Wrong?: The Morality of Marital Behavior Among the Ewe*. Ghana: Waterville Publishing House.
- Emecheta, B. (1989). *The bride price*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Engstrom, E. (2008). Unraveling The Knot Political Economy and Cultural Hegemony in Wedding Media. *Journal of communication Inquiry*, 32 (1), 60-82.
- Engstrom, E. (2012). The Bride Factory: Mass media portrayals of women and weddings. New York: Peter Lang.
- Engstrom, E., & Semic, B. (2003). Portrayal of religion in reality TV programming: Hegemony and the contemporary American wedding. *Journal of Media and Religion*, 2(3), 145-163.

- Erlank, N. (2014). The white wedding: Affect and economy in South Africa in the early twentieth century. *African Studies Review*, 57 (02), 29-50.
- Fairchild, E. (2014). Examining wedding rituals through a multidimensional gender lens: The analytic importance of attending to (in) consistency. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 43 (3), 361-389.
- Fairclough, N. & Wodak, R. (1997) Critical discourse analysis. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.) Introduction to Discourse Analysis. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). Media discourse. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). Discourse, social theory, and social research: The discourse of welfare reform. *Journal of sociolinguistics*, 4 (2), 163 -195.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). Political correctness: The politics of culture and language. *Discourse & Society*, 14 (1), 17-28.
- Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis. The Critical Study of Language*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fanon, F. (1967). Black Skin, White Masks. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Fenton, N. (2011). Deregulation or democracy? New media, news, neoliberalism and the public interest. *Continuum*, 25(1), 63-72.
- Fiske, J. (1991). *Reading the popular*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fontana, B. (2008). Hegemony and Power in Gramsci. *Hegemony: Studies in consensus and coercion*, 56-80.
- Genz, S., & Brabon, B. A. (2009). *Postfeminism: Cultural texts and theories*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

- Goode, E., & Ben-Yehuda, N. (1994). *Moral panics: The social construction of deviance*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Goode, E., & Ben-Yehuda, N. (2010). *Moral panics: The social construction of deviance* (2nd ed.). Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gqola, P. (2001). Defining people: Analysing power, language and representation in metaphors of the New South Africa. *Transformation*, (47), 94 -106.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci: Ed. and Transl. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith*. G. Nowell-Smith, & Q. Hoare (Eds.). International Publishers.
- Gunaratne, S. A. (2009). Emerging global divides in media and communication theory: European universalism versus non-Western reactions. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 19(4), 366-383.
- Gürcan, E., & Peker, E. (2015). *Challenging Neoliberalism at Turkey's Gezi Park: From Private Discontent to Collective Class Action*. Springer.
- Hall, S. (1996). Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity. *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*, 411-440.
- Hallin, D. C. (2008). Neoliberalism, social movements and change in media systems in the late twentieth century. *The media and social theory*, 43-58.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief introduction to neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harzewski, S. (2011). *Chick lit and postfeminism*. Virginia: University of Virginia Press.
- Heise, F. (2012). "I'm a Modern Bride": On the Relationship between Marital Hegemony, Bridal Fictions, and Postfeminism. *M/C Journal*, 15(6).
- Hill, A. (2005). *Reality TV: Audiences and popular factual television*. Psychology Press.

- Holborow, M. (2015). *Language and neoliberalism*. London: Routledge.
- Hooks, B. (1990). Feminism: A transformational politic. *Theoretical perspectives on sexual difference*, 185-193.
- Hooks, B. (1992). *Representing whiteness in the black imagination*. New York: Routledge.
- Horn, P. (1991). Conference on Women and Gender in Southern Africa: Another view of the dynamics. *Transformation*, (15), 83-88.
- Howson, R., & Smith, K. (Eds.). (2008). *Hegemony: studies in consensus and coercion*. New York: Routledge.
- Hudson-Weems, C. (1993). *Africana womanism: Reclaiming ourselves*. Michigan: Bedford Publishers Inc.
- Hudson-Weems, C. (1998). Self-naming and self-definition: An agenda for survival. In *Nnaemeka, O.(Ed). Sisterhood, feminisms and power: From Africa to the diaspora* (pp. 449-452).Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc.
- Hudson-Weems, C. (2004). *Africana womanist literary theory*. New Jersey: Africa World Press.
- Hudson-Weems, C. (2012). Ending de-womanisation, de-feminisation and de-humanisation via self-naming, self-definition and genuine sisterhood. In Muwati, I., Mguni, Z., Gwekwerere, T., Magosvongwe, R., Harare (Eds.), *Rediscoursing African Womanhood in the Search for Sustainable Renaissance: Africana Womanism in Multi-disciplinary Approaches* (pp.1-7). Harare: College Press.
- Ingraham, C. (1999). *White weddings: Romancing heterosexuality in popular culture*. New York: Routledge.

- Ingraham, C. (2009). *White weddings: Romancing heterosexuality in popular culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Jorgensen and Phillips. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: Sage.
- Kimport, K. (2012). Remaking the white wedding? Same-sex wedding photographs' challenge to symbolic heteronormativity. *Gender & Society*, 26(6), 874-899.
- Kirwen, M. C. (2005). African cultural knowledge: Themes and embedded beliefs. Nairobi: Mias Books.
- Kolawole, M. E. (1997). *Womanism and African consciousness*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Lazar, M. M. (2011). The right to be beautiful: postfeminist identity and consumer beauty advertising. In Gill, R. & C. Scharff (Eds.), *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity* (pp. 37-51). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lockett, C. (1996). Feminism (s) and writing in English in South Africa. In M.J. Daymond (Ed.), *South African Feminisms: Writing, Theory, and Criticism, 1990-1994* (pp.3-26). New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction*. London: Sage.
- Makaudze, G., & Shoko, P. H. (2015). The Re-conceptualization of Shona and Venda Taboos: Towards an Afrocentric Discourse. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 8 (2), 261-275.

- Marais, H. (2001). *South Africa: Limits to change: The political economy of transition*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mararike, C., G. (2012). Developing the whole person: Education based on concepts drawn from culture. In I. Muwati, Z. Mguni, T. Gwekwerere & R. Magosvongwe, *Rediscoursing African Womanhood in the Search for Sustainable Renaissance: Africana Womanism in Multi-disciplinary Approaches*, (pp. 8-16). Harare: College Press.
- Mboti, N. (2012). Wife and whore: African women in the *Last King of Scotland* and *Blood Diamond*. In Muwati, I., Mguni, Z., Gwekwerere, T., Magosvongwe, R (Eds.), *Rediscoursing African Womanhood in the Search for Sustainable Renaissance: Africana Womanism in Multi-disciplinary Approaches* (pp.24-32). Harare: College Press.
- McRobbie, A. (2009). *The aftermath of feminism: Gender, culture and social change*. London: Sage.
- Meyer, M., & Wodak, R. (2009). Critical discourse analysis: history, agenda, theory and methodology. *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 1-34.
- Mikell, G. (1995). African feminism: Toward a new politics of representation. *Feminist Studies*, 21(2), 405-424.
- Moemeka, A. (1989). Communication and Africa Culture: A Sociological Analysis. In S. K. Bofo (Ed.), *Communication and culture: African perspectives* (pp.1-10) Africa Region: WACC.

- Mohanty, C. T. (1991). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. In C.T. Mohanty, A. Russo & L. Torres. (Eds.), *Third world women and the politics of feminism* (pp.51-80). Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Mohanty, C., Russo, A., & Torres, L. (1991). *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Mompathi, R. (1982). Women and Life under Apartheid. One is Not a Woman, One Becomes. In D.W. Ntiri (Ed), *The African Woman in a Transitional Society: African Women Tell Their Story* (pp.108-113). Michigan: Bedford.
- Monsarrat, A. (1974). *And the bride wore...: The story of the white wedding*. New York: Dodd Mead.
- Mupotsa, D. (2015). The promise of happiness: Desire, attachment and freedom in post/apartheid South Africa. *Critical Arts*, 29 (2), 183-198.
- Murray, S., & Ouellette, L. (Eds.). (2004). *Reality TV: Remaking television culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- Musharhamina, M. G. C. (1985). *Traditional African Marriage and Christian Marriage*. St Paul Publications.
- Muwati, I., & Gambahaya, Z. (2012). The Private/Public Space Dichotomy: An Africana Womanist Analysis of the Gendering of Space and Power. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 36 (2), 100 – 107.
- Navarro, V. (2007). Neoliberalism as a class ideology; or, the political causes of the growth of inequalities. *International Journal of Health Services*, 37(1), 47-62.

- Ndlovu, S. (2008). A Reassessment of Women's Power in the Zulu Kingdom. In C.B. Laband & Sithole, J. (Eds.). *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (pp.111-121). Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Nnaemeka, O. (1998). Introduction: reading the rainbow. In O. Nnaemeka (Ed.), *Sisterhood, feminisms, and power: From Africa to the diaspora* (pp.1-35). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Norman, F. (1989). Language and power. *London and New York: Longman.*
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2010). Re-thinking communication research and development in Africa. In *Proceedings of the 4th IDIA (International Development Informatics Association) Conference.*
- Ortner, S. B. (2014). Too soon for post-feminism: The ongoing life of patriarchy in neoliberal America. *History and Anthropology, 25* (4), 530-549.
- Otnes, C. C., & Pleck, E. H. (2003). *Cinderella dreams: The allure of the lavish wedding.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Oyewùmí, O. (2003). African Women and Feminism Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood.
- Palmer, G. (2004). Class and transformation in lifestyle television. In Holmes, S., & Jermyn, D (Eds.). *Understanding reality television* (pp.173-190). Psychology Press.
- Patel, R. (2007). *Stuffed and starved: Markets, power and the hidden battle for the world food system.* Black Inc.
- Peck, J. (2001). Neoliberalizing states: thin policies/hard outcomes. *Progress in human geography, 25*(3), 445-455.

- Pellerin, M. (2012). Defining Africana Womanhood: Developing an Africana Womanism Methodology. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 36 (1), 76-85.
- Pollin, R., Epstein, G., Heintz, J., & Ndikumana, L. (2009). An employment-targeted economic program for South Africa. In *Economic Alternatives for Growth, Employment and Poverty Reduction* (pp. 227-240). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Ponte, S., Roberts, S., & Van Sittert, L. (2007). 'Black economic empowerment', business and the state in South Africa. *Development and Change*, 38(5), 933-955.
- Price, T. (1954). *African marriage*. SCM Press.
- Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2009). Unveiled Pre-wedding Weight Concerns and Health and Beauty Plans of Australian Brides. *Journal of health psychology*, 14 (7), 1027-1035.
- Prudham, S. (2004). Poisoning the well: neoliberalism and the contamination of municipal water in Walkerton, Ontario. *Geoforum*, 35(3), 343-359.
- Reed, P. Y. A. (2001). Africana womanism and African feminism: A philosophical, literary, and cosmological dialectic on family. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 25 (3), 168-176.
- Roberts, M. (2007). The Fashion Police: Governing the self in What Not to Wear. In Y. Tasker & D. Negra (Eds.), *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (pp.227-248). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Romero, P., A. (2015). *African Women: A Historical Panorama*. New Jersey: Markus Wiener.

- Rudwick, S., & Posel, D. (2014). Contemporary functions of ilobolo (bridewealth) in urban South African Zulu society. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 32 (1), 118-136.
- Said, E. W. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. New York: Vintage.
- Sender, K. (2006). Queens for a day: Queer Eye for the Straight Guy and the neoliberal project. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23 (2), 131-151.
- Snieszek, T. (2005). Is it our day or the bride's day? The division of wedding labor and its meaning for couples. *Qualitative Sociology*, 28 (3), 215-234.
- Springer, K. (2007). Divas, Evil Black bitches, and Bitter Black Women: African-American Women in Postfeminist and Post-Civil Rights Popular Culture. Y. Tasker & D. Negra (Eds.), *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (pp.1-26). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Steady, F. C. (1987). African feminism: A worldwide perspective. In R. Terborg-Penn, S. Harley, & A. Benton Rushing (Eds.), *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora* (pp.3-24). Washington: Howard University
- Stocchetti, M. (2011). Images: Who gets what, when and how? In Stocchetti, M., & Kukkonen, K. (Eds.). *Images in use: towards the critical analysis of visual communication* (pp.11-38). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Stocchetti, M., & Kukkonen, K. (Eds.). (2011). *Images in use: towards the critical analysis of visual communication*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Tasker, Y. & Negra, D. Introduction: Feminist politics and post-feminism culture. In Y. Tasker & D. Negra (Eds.), *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (pp.249-276). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Thapan, M. (1995). Gender, body and everyday life. *Social Scientist*, 32-58.
- Thompson, L. M. (2000). *A history of South Africa*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Van Dijk T. (2003) *Ideology and discourse: A multidisciplinary introduction*. Available at: <http://www.discourses.org/UnpublishedArticles/Ideology%20and%20discourse.pdf>.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2000). New (s) racism: A discourse analytical approach. *Ethnic minorities and the media*, 33-49.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2008). *Discourse and power*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (1996). The representation of social actors. *Texts and practices: Readings in critical discourse analysis*, 1, 32-70.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2000). The construction of purpose in discourse. *Discourse and social life*, 66-82.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Leeuwen, T., & Wodak, R. (1999). Legitimizing immigration control: A discourse-historical analysis. *Discourse Studies*, 1 (1), 83-118.
- Wa Thiong'o, N. (1994). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. Nairobi: East African Publishers.
- Wallace, C. (2004). *All dressed in white: The irresistible rise of the American wedding*. New York, NY: Penguin Group USA.
- Wang, G., & Kuo, E. C. (2010). The Asian communication debate: Culture-specificity, culture-generality, and beyond. *Asian Journal of communication*, 20(2), 152-165.

- Weeks, J. (1999). Stuck in low GEAR? Macroeconomic policy in South Africa, 1996—
98. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 795-811.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & society*, 1(2), 125-151.
- Wicoff, K. (2006). *I Do But I Don't: Walking Down the Aisle Without Losing Your Mind*.
Da Capo Press.
- Wodak, R. & Busch, B. (2004) Approaches to media texts. In: J. Downing, D. McQuail,
P. Schlesinger & E. Wartella (Eds.), *Handbook of Media Studies* (pp.105-123).
London: Sage.
- Wodak, R. (Ed.). (1997). *Gender and discourse*. London: Sage.
- Wolf, N. (2013). *The beauty myth: How images of beauty are used against women*.
Griffin, P. (2015). *Popular culture, political economy and the death of feminism:
Why women are in refrigerators and other stories*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Worden, N. (2011). *The making of modern South Africa: conquest, apartheid,
democracy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Xinari, C. (2010). From New Woman to "New" Feminism: Some Thoughts on the Post-
Feminist Era. *Journal of Critical Studies in Business and Society*, 1 (1-2), 7-14.

Electronic References

Channel24. (2015, December 21). Our Perfect Wedding groom jailed for fraud.

Retrieved from: <http://www.channel24.co.za/TV/News/our-perfect-wedding-groom-jailed-for-fraud-20151221>

City Press. (2015, March 11). SA's super wealthy: Who they are, where they live and what they do. Retrieved from: <http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/SAs-super-wealthy-Who-they-are-where-they-live-and-what-they-do-20150429>

Mbeki, T. (2008, October 31). Mbeki's letter to the ANC. *Independent News Online*.

Retrieved from: <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/mbeki-s-letter-to-the-anc-1.422603#.VkULbCxdHZ4>

Mbeki, T. (2014). Tasks of the African Progressive Movement. *The Thinker*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thethinker.co.za/resources/Thinker%2059%20full%20mag.pdf>

Mothombeni, A. (2015, December 21). Our Perfect Wedding groom jailed. Retrieved from: <http://www.sundayworld.co.za/news/2015/12/20/our-perfect-wedding-groom-jailed>

Msimang, S. (2016, January 7). South Africa has no patience for Penny Sparrow's apartheid nostalgia. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/07/south-africa-penny-sparrow-apartheid-nostalgia-racist>

Peter, M. (2012, June 8). Parenting with Criselda Kanada. *Parent 24*. Retrieved from:

http://www.parent24.com/Teen_13-18/Development/care_nutrition/Parenting-with-Criselda-Kananda-20120607

SowetanLive. (2015, December 6). Vodacom withdraws Our Perfect Wedding

sponsorship. Retrieved from:

<http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2015/12/06/vodacom-withdraws-our-perfect-wedding-sponsorship>

Statistics South Africa. (2012). Census 2011. Retrieved from:

<http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P03014/P030142011.pdf>

TimesLive. (2015, December 21). Groom from 'Our Perfect Wedding' jailed for forging

payment. Retrieved from: <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2015/12/21/Groom-from-Our-Perfect-Wedding-jailed-for-forging-payment1>

Zimela, Z. (2015, December 1). Absa pulls Our Perfect Wedding sponsorship. *Destiny*

Connect. Retrieved from: <http://www.destinyconnect.com/2015/12/01/absa-pulls-sponsorship-from-our-perfect-wedding/>

VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

Lindani Mbunyuza-Memani

lindani.memani@gmail.com

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa
National Diploma, Commercial Administration, April 1999

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa
Master of Applied Media, April 2011

Dissertation Title: Culture, Class, and Gender Wars in Pursuit of A Black Identity in
Contemporary South Africa: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Reality TV Shows, TV
Audience Comments, and Wedding Speeches

Major Professor: Lisa Brooten