

**ABSENT MASCULINITY AND FEMININE RESILIENCE: A POST-COLONIAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DISCOURSES OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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## DECLARATION

I declare that **ABSENT MASCULINITY AND FEMININE RESILIENCE: A POST-COLONIAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DISCOURSES OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN SOUTH AFRICA** is my work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged utilizing complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any degree at any institution.

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Letsoalo KS

.....

Date

## **DEDICATION**

It is with great honour to dedicate this work to my mother, Dina Mokokobale Letsoalo.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge my heavenly Father for showing me His grace and mercy during this study until its completion. I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor T. Oyedemi for believing in me and encouraging me to be the best version of myself. His knowledge, guidance, and support gave me the strength to finish this study. I further acknowledge the University of Limpopo's Department of Communication and Media and Information Studies for granting me the opportunity to pursue this study. I cannot forget to appreciate my mother, Dina Mokokobale Letsoalo for the love, support, and encouragement she gave me throughout the journey of this study. My sincere gratitude further goes to my siblings, Paballo and Monica for their moral support throughout my journey of conducting this study. Lastly and most importantly, I acknowledge the National Research Foundation (NRF) for the financial assistance towards this research.

## ABSTRACT

South Africa experiences a high rate of absent fathers and this makes single-mother households a prominent family structure in the country. There are many framings and discourses of single mother households in the media, ranging from the critical to the negative and occasional positive ones. But in these discourses, do the resilience, strength, and hard work of single mothers form part of the framing of single mothers in South Africa?

The destruction of the Black family structure is one of the disastrous legacies of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. The discoveries of gold and diamonds brought a rapid social and economic transformation in the country, and Black families bore the brunt of this transformation which changed the Black family structure to date. The implementation of colonial and apartheid policies such as the migrant labour system was set to grow the White economy and achieve this goal by getting cheap labour from Black males in the homelands. The migrant labour system forced Black men to work in the mines leaving their families behind as the men were placed in single-sex hostels. This system, therefore, resulted in many households being fatherless and women or mothers wielding the household responsibilities while their husbands were in the cities.

This historical context is important in studying current absent fatherhood and single mother households in South Africa. The study used a historical approach to understand the Black family structure prior colonial era, and how it transitioned during colonialism, and apartheid up and in the current post-apartheid era. This study is built on the theories of post-coloniality, the intersectional burden of femininity, media framing, and it engages critical theoretical scholars such as Homi Bhabha, Arlie Hochschild, Simone de Beauvoir, Bell hooks, and Kimberle Crenshaw amongst others. Through these theoretical lenses, I examined the influence of colonialism and apartheid on the contemporary father absence and female-headed households. The theoretical lenses were further used to examine how the past influence the future and how women's issues are addressed. I also examined the role of media in the (re)presentation of female-headed households. The study tackled three objectives: to examine the media discourse of single motherhood in South Africa; to analyze if women's resilience in matrifocal families forms part of the media discourse of single

motherhood, and lastly to explore the effects of colonialism and apartheid on Black family structure and their consequences in South Africa today. Data were collected through an analysis of a documentary film titled “*Last Grave at Dimbaza*”. This was an apartheid-era documentary that captured the lives of both Black and White families during apartheid. I examined this film to locate data that capture the media discourse about absent fatherhood during apartheid—which directly reflects the South African colonial-apartheid influence on this phenomenon. Data were also collected from online newspaper publications such as *IOL*, *TimesLive*, and *News24* on stories about single-motherhood within a period of three years from January 2018 to December 2020 to address the media construction of single-motherhood in the post-apartheid era.

The results of the study show that media discourse tends to perpetuate a normative negative and global trend of stereotyping mothers who receive social grants. Single mothers are portrayed as a group that misappropriates state resources, who pocket state money to meet their personal needs. They are thus stereotyped as social burdens on the state finances and contribute to the country's economic risks. Women are portrayed as victims of apartheid without any agency in the absence of their men. The study revealed that women had to find ways to survive or feed their families while waiting for their husbands to send money. However, what is missing in this portrayal is how women in the Bantustans survived under the migrant labour and apartheid laws and policies. Thus, this study found that coloniality seems to continue to shape the Black family structure and that the father's absence in the black society persists and this pattern is transmitted from one generation to another. It was also revealed in this study that when the father is absent, he leaves a trait of absence that his son becomes likely to inherit. Black families are still built from the bourgeois colonialist environment, absent fatherhood and female-headed households are the legacies of colonialism as it is inherited from the colonial background and compounded by socio-economic challenges. Single mothers who are confronted with multiple burdens in raising their children should have their agency, resilience, and challenging work acknowledged. They should be celebrated, not scorned.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xii
LIST OF TABLE .....	xii
CHAPTER 1.....	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY .....	1
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Definitions of key concepts.....	3
1.3 Motivation of the study .....	3
1.4 Research problem.....	4
1.5 Purpose of the study and research objectives .....	5
1.5.1 Research Objectives .....	5
SCHOLARLY CONTEXT OF THE STUDY .....	5
1.6 Literature review .....	5
1.6.1 Colonialism, apartheid, and black families in South Africa.....	6
1.6.2 Absent Masculinity / Fatherhood .....	6
1.6.3 Matrifocality and Feminine Resilience .....	7
1.6.4 Media Discourse of Single Mothers and Female-Headed Households .....	8
1.7 The role theory.....	8
1.7.1 Post-Coloniality .....	9
1.7.2 Intersectional Burden of Femininity .....	9
1.7.3 Media Framing.....	9
1.8 Background to the research methodology .....	9
1.9 Significance of the study .....	10
1.10 Overview and the structure of the research .....	11
CHAPTER 2.....	12
COLONIALISM AND APARTHEID ON BLACK FAMILIES IN SOUTH AFRICA .....	12
(LITERATURE REVIEW) .....	12
2.1 Introduction .....	12
2.2 PRE-COLONIAL AFRICAN FAMILIES.....	12
2.3 The Traditional Bantu Family Structure Prior to The Arrival of the Europeans .....	13
2.4 Marriage and Custom .....	14
Preferential marriage .....	15
Prescribed marriage.....	16

2.5	Type of Marriage .....	17
2.6	Economy of Bantu Tribe .....	17
2.6.1	Work and Family .....	18
2.7	COLONIALISM AND AFRICAN FAMILIES.....	18
2.7.1	The Arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck in South Africa.....	18
2.7.2	BEGINNING OF THE MINING INDUSTRY AND THE AFRICAN FAMILY.....	19
2.7.2.1	The Native Land Act of 1913 .....	20
2.7.2.2	The impact of Native land on African families .....	21
2.7.2.3	Forced Removals.....	22
2.7.2.4	The impact of force removals and their impact on black families .....	23
2.7.3	The Migrant Labour System.....	24
2.7.3.1	The impact of the migrant labour system on African families .....	26
2.8	APARTHEID AND AFRICAN FAMILIES .....	27
2.8.1	The continuous of migrant labour system under apartheid and its impact on Black families.....	28
2.9	The Mixed Marriage Act No 55 of 1949 and Immorality Act No 21 of 1950 .....	30
2.9.1	The impact of Mixed Marriage and Immorality act on families .....	31
2.10	Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950.....	32
2.10.1	How the population registration act separated families .....	32
2.11	Group Area Act No 41 of 1950.....	33
2.12	Pass Law of 1952 .....	34
2.12.1	The impact of pass law on black families .....	34
2.13	Conclusion .....	35
CHAPTER 3.....		37
ABSENT MASCULINITY, MATRIFOCALITY, AND FEMININE RESILIENCE (LITERATURE REVIEW) .....		37
3. Introduction .....		37
SECTION A: ABSENT MASCULINITY .....		37
3.1	The cultural aspect of fatherhood .....	37
3.2	The current nature of absent masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa.....	39
3.3	Socioeconomic factors of father absence .....	40
3.3.1	Unemployment and poverty .....	40
3.3.2	Cultural factors.....	43



3.4 Intergenerational father absence in South Africa .....	45
SECTION B: MATRIFOCALITY AND FEMININE RESILIENCE .....	47
3.5 Matrilocality .....	47
3.5.1 Children living in matrilocal families.....	48
3.6 Female-Headed Households .....	51
3.7 Socio-economic factors of female-headed households .....	53
3.7.1 Unemployment and Poverty .....	53
3.7.2 Gender-Based Violence .....	55
3.8 Gender Inequality and Female-headed Households .....	58
3.9 Feminine Resilience .....	59
3.10 The New Family Households .....	62
3.10.1 Lesbian and Gay Households .....	63
3.11 Media Discourse of Single Mothers .....	65
3.11.1 Media narrative of single mothers .....	65
3.11.2 Media Narrative of Single Mothers: Child Support Grant in South Africa .....	66
3.12 Conclusion .....	71
CHAPTER 4.....	72
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	72
4.1 POST-COLONIAL THEORY .....	72
4.1.1 Post-coloniality .....	72
4.1.2 Post-colonial feminism .....	75
4.2 INTERSECTIONAL BURDEN OF FEMININITY .....	78
4.2.1 Double Burden Theory .....	78
4.2.2 Intersectionality in femininity theory.....	80
4.3 MEDIA FRAMING THEORY .....	84
CHAPTER 5.....	88
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	88
5.1 Introduction .....	88
5.2 Research Methodology .....	88
5.2.1 Research design.....	88
5.2.2 Sampling .....	89
5.3 Data Collection.....	90
5.3.1 Archival media materials.....	90

<i>Last Grave at Dimbaza</i> .....	90
1. Scene 1: Migrant labour and absent fathers: Men in shacks or hostels. ....	91
2. Scene 2: Poverty and living conditions of women in the Bantustans (“Women grow old in their twenties”) .....	91
3. Scene 3: Living conditions and the experience of children in the Bantustans. ....	91
4. Scene 4: The experience of black motherhood and fatherhood.....	91
5. Scene 5: The disruption of black family life: Separation of men from their families.	91
6. Scene 6: Lost generation: Freshly dug graves for children.....	91
<i>Online Newspaper publication</i> .....	93
5.4 Data analysis .....	97
5.4.1 Post-colonial textual analysis.....	97
5.4.2 Thematic analysis.....	98
5.5 Quality criteria .....	100
5.5.1 Credibility.....	100
5.5.2 Transferability.....	100
5.5.3 Dependability.....	100
5.5.4 Conformability.....	101
5.6 Ethical Consideration .....	101
Permission for the study .....	101
Objectivity.....	101
5.7 Conclusion .....	101
CHAPTER 6.....	102
LAST GRAVE AT DIMBAZA: A POST-COLONIAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA CONSTRUCTION OF APARTHEID'S DESTRUCTION OF BLACK FAMILIES .....	102
6.1 Introduction.....	102
6.2 Postcolonial Textual Analysis .....	103
6.3 Analysis.....	103
Scene 1: Migrant labour and absent fathers: Men in shacks/ hostel.....	104
Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 1: Migrant labour and absent fathers: Men in shacks/ hostel .....	105
Scene 2: Poverty and living conditions of women in the Bantustans (“Women grow old in their twenties”) .....	108
Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 2: Poverty and living conditions of women in the Bantustans (“Women grow old in their twenties”) .....	109
Scene 3: Living conditions and the experience of children in the Bantustans .....	110

Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 3: Living conditions and the experience of children in the Bantustans .....	111
Scene 4: The experience of black motherhood and fatherhood.....	112
Scene 5: The disruption of black family life: Separation of men from their families ....	116
Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 5: The disruption of black family life: Separation of men from their families.....	116
Scene 6: Lost generation: Freshly dug graves for children.....	117
Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 6: Freshly dug graves for children.....	118
6.4 Thematic analysis.....	120
6.4.1 Apartheid racism and racial capitalism contributed to today's absent fatherhood .....	120
6.4.2 Erasure of women's resilience.....	121
6.4.3 The legacy of the migrant labour system and female-headed households.....	122
6.5 Conclusion.....	123
CHAPTER 7.....	124
POSTCOLONIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLD .....	124
(DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDING) .....	124
7.1 Introduction.....	124
List of articles collected for analysis .....	124
7.2 Research Findings.....	130
7.3 Conclusion .....	140
CHAPTER 8.....	142
SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION .....	142
8.1 Introduction .....	142
8.2 Summary and discussion of the research.....	142
8.3 The media discourse of single motherhood in South Africa .....	143
Do women's resilience in matrifocal families form part of media discourse about single-motherhood? .....	145
The effects of colonialism and apartheid on black family structure and their consequences in South Africa.....	146
8.3 Contribution of the Research.....	148
8.4 Limitations of the study .....	149
<i>Limitations of data</i> .....	149
<i>Limitations of semiotic textual analysis and thematic analysis</i> .....	150
<i>Limitations due to Covid19</i> .....	150

8.5 Recommendation .....	150
8.5.1. <i>Recommendation for future research</i> .....	150
8.5.2. <i>Recommendation for society</i> .....	151
8.6 Conclusion .....	151
REFERENCES .....	156
ETHICAL CERTIFICATE .....	192
ORIGINALITY REPORT .....	193
CONFIRMATION OF EDITING .....	194

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 A traditional Nguni homestead in South Africa .....	14
Figure 2.2 Force removal in Kammaskraal women and children.....	23
Figure 2.3. Single-sex hostel.....	29
Figure 3.1 Male unemployment.....	41
Figure 3.2 unemployment and poverty .....	54
Figure 3.3 Government referred to as Mzansi's sugar daddy.....	70
Figure 4.1 News headline on Social Grants .....	86
Figure 5.1 A poster advertising the showing of Last Grave at Dimbaza .....	92
Figure 6.1 Screenshot of Mr. and Mrs. Nkosi.....	115
Figure 6.2 A screenshot of freshly dug graves .....	119

## LIST OF TABLE

Table 7.1 Articles retained for analysis.....	130
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

There is a historical context to absent fatherhood in South Africa. One of the disastrous legacies of South Africa's colonial and apartheid history is the disruption of the Black African family structure (Posel & Devey, 2007). The colonial dispossession of Africans off their lands and destruction of their rural agricultural lives forced many black men to look for alternative sources of income outside their homelands. The discoveries of gold and diamonds in 1880-1886 brought rapid economic expansion as well as political and social transformation in South Africa. The rapid growth of the mining sector led to increasing demand for manual labour, urbanization, and racial classification (Smit, 2001). To supply the manual labours in the mining sector, the British imposed cash taxation demands which forced many African men to migrate to the mines for work.

In homelands where there were few job opportunities, a large population of oppressed Africans was trapped. This forced Africans, particularly men, to migrate to urban areas to find jobs. However, in urban areas, several apartheid constraints prohibited family migration or permanent settlement of black people. Wives and children were not allowed to join the males who worked in the cities and mines because many lived in hostel-like conditions. The introduction of the migrant labour system meant that mainly men who worked in the mines or urban areas were allowed to reside in urban areas, while homelands belonged to people whose labour contributions were not required (Platzky & Walker, 1985; Hall & Posel, 2019).

Women and children formed part of the surplus population along with the elderly. The deliberate disruption of black African families by the apartheid regime, which Budlender & Lund (2011: 926) refer to as the "state-orchestrated destruction of family life", had a massive effect on African household structure. The effects on the family structure have influenced the women's position in the family, bearing both the economic and caregiving responsibilities as well as the living arrangements for their children and families. The traditional structure of a family faded away in African

societies especially in the homelands as many men spent more time away from their homes.

The rise of father absence increased the number of female-headed households and has become a major concern within societies, both nationally and internationally (Lesetedi, 2018). In the United States of America, approximately 50.4% of households are headed by females (United States Census Bureau, 2017). In Botswana, 55% of households are headed by females (Lesetedi, 2018). In South Africa, 43.1% of children lived with their mothers, 33.8% with both parents, 3.3% with fathers, and 19.8% with neither parents. This means that 63% of children in South Africa do not live with their fathers (Statistics SA, 2018). In the widespread occurrence of absent fathers, women carry the double burden of being providers as well as being the person primarily responsible for unpaid care and household work.

Within a patriarchal notion of masculinity, absent fatherhood often exists. This idea of masculinity was assigned to power and accountability which was fundamental to the position of a man in his family and community—making patriarchy a social standard. There has been an increased interest in the study of fatherhood in recent decades which has provided numerous insights into the significance and an image of various viewpoints on the subject. While global and local interest in fatherhood has increased, there is very little research done on motherhood regarding the colonial legacies of the construction of post-colonial motherhood.

The idea of motherhood is attached to some roles including childbirth, physical care, emotional care, and socialization (Walker, 1995). According to Bradshaw and Millar (1991), single motherhood refers to a mother who solely provides childcare and performs all sets of expectations and conditions associated with motherhood without a male partner. The narratives of single motherhood in South Africa are always viewed from a negative perspective. In an endeavor of reducing the gap in knowledge and comprehension of motherhood, fatherhood, and women's resilience, this study aims to analyze the media discourses on single motherhood and specifically single mothers' resilience in the case of absent fathers in post-apartheid South Africa and relate this to issues of communication, culture, and identity.

## 1.2 Definitions of key concepts

The following definitions are not direct definitions of the concepts but are rather the connotations of how these concepts are engaged and used in this study.

**Colonialism:** the conquest, political and economic domination, and control over the colonized people. It also destroyed the culture and history of the colonized and emptied the minds of the colonized (Horvath, 1972).

**Absent father:** is perceived as a father who do not physically reside with their children, do not maintain communication, and do not offer emotional and financial support (Morrell & Richter, 2006).

**Absent Masculinity:** men who do not achieve the dominant discourses of what it means to be a man in one's society (Mkhize, 2006).

**Apartheid:** the racial segregation policy within South Africa in a hierarchy of power, with whites being at the top and Africans at the bottom (Clark & Wonger, 2011).

**Post-Colonialism:** the condition of the social and political context of colonial legacy. It is, however, not just a condition but a continuity. It implies that there is nothing post in colonialism, the prefix "post" implies that the inequities of colonial rule have to be erased. It is therefore premature to proclaim the dismissal of colonialism (Loomba, 1998).

**Feminine resilience:** the capability of women to demonstrate strength in their ability to minimize the effects of distraction and disengagement when confronted with challenges (Jefferis & Theron, 2018).

**Matrifocality:** refers to types of relatedness that exist in societies where mothers are structurally, culturally, and effectively central (Ypeij, 2009).

**Single mother:** A single mother is a woman who has taken on the role of primary caregiver for a child or children and does not live with a spouse or partner (Partners in development initiatives, 2011).

## 1.3 Motivation of the study

The motivation of this study can be divided into three categories, namely: social motivation, academic motivation, and personal motivation. Regarding social



motivation, it is difficult to turn a blind eye on the historical context of fatherhood in South Africa and how it gave birth to female-headed households in post-colonial South Africa. With regard to academic motivation, the existing literature in South Africa is limited concerning celebrating the resilience of women who head households. Often narratives about single mothers tend to present a negative image of these women and of children who grow up in such households—neglecting the strengths of women in these households and the need to address this condition as a construct of the colonial-apartheid history. Therefore this study sought to examine media discourses of single-motherhood in South Africa through analysis of media content. The analysis of historical and current media content provides for a study of post-colonial media discourse of female-headed households in South Africa.

Lastly, the personal motivation for pursuing this study is that it allows for phenomenological reflexivity. I was raised by a single mother, with no male or fatherly role model in the house. I watched my mother go through countless challenges and never yield to any urge of giving up. Rather, she had a mechanism for dealing with challenges. In addition to the experience of being raised without a father, I experienced an identity crisis, developed hatred toward my father, and felt abandoned. Thus, I sought to understand the concept of absent masculinity and study how narratives about and images of single mothers are constructed in society, especially through the media. I also sought to understand how historical (colonialism and apartheid) constructs and current social and political conditions impact the construction and perception of single-mother households and absent fatherhood.

#### **1.4 Research problem**

The years of colonialism and apartheid left South African society with a legacy of fragmented family life which continues to have long-term repercussions on the roles of caregivers and the capacity to care for children (Rabe, 2006). South Africa has an incredibly large number of absent fathers, and the figures of absent fathers escalate even after the apartheid regime. This is not only a result of colonial legacy but of other socioeconomic factors that contribute to the current state of absent fatherhood such as divorce, cohabitation, abandonment, death of a father, and migration (Koooper, 2014). For these reasons, many women are left with the burden of child-care and heading households. These female-headed households are often linked with negative

narratives of teenage pregnancy, absent fathers, identity crisis, patriarchal poverty, and are viewed as damaged and dysfunctional (Uchenna, 2013). Previous studies on female-headed families were based on the negative consequences as many scholars were predisposed to proceed from the perspective of family deficit which considers female-headed families as “disrupted and broke” (Mabelane, Makofane & Kgadima, 2019: 158). The negative effects that are generally correlated with children raised by single mothers have been given enormous attention, but the media narrative on women's resilience has not been extensively studied. Hence, it was critical for this study to examine how media narratives reflect women’s resilience in single-mother households.

### **1.5 Purpose of the study and research objectives**

The purpose of this study was to examine media discourses about female-headed households and absent masculinity. This study intended to conduct a post-colonial analysis of media discourse of female-headed households and absent fatherhood in South Africa.

#### **1.5.1 Research Objectives**

- To analyze the media discourses of single motherhood in South Africa.
- To explore if women’s resilience in matrifocal families forms part of media discourses about single-mother households.
- To analyze how the effects of colonialism and apartheid on black family structure and their consequences are narrated in media discourses in South Africa.

## **SCHOLARLY CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

### **1.6 Literature review**

The first part of the scholarly context of this study was largely based on literature that was relevant to this research. I examined scholarly works on the historical background of African family structure, absent masculinity in South Africa, matrifocality and feminine resilience, and media discourse on single mothers and female-headed

households. The following sections provide an introductory preview of the literature review of this research which is discussed in subsequent chapters of this research.

### **1.6.1 Colonialism, apartheid, and black families in South Africa**

The colonial and apartheid history of South Africa played a critical role in the family institution (Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba, 2016). The rapid growth of the mining sector which emanated from the discovery of gold and diamonds led to increasing demand for cheap labour, urbanization, and racial classification, all of which led to family disruption in South Africa (Smit, 2001).

Budlender and Lund (2011) investigated the legacy of family disruption in South Africa and highlighted that the years of colonialism shadowed by apartheid, have left the black South African societies with a disruption of family life. This was a result of policies such as the pass law which restricted people's movement and the labour migrant system. These policies left black women with caregiving responsibilities and forced them to balance the need to be caregivers and financial providers while men held little responsibility for financial and other family support as they were in the mines away from their family homes. In addition, the study of Smit (2001) of the impacts of migration labour on African families established that the labour migrant system that took men from rural to urban areas, left a continuous legacy on African families. The study revealed that the absenteeism of men in families left women to bear more family responsibilities and gain greater decision-making power.

### **1.6.2 Absent Masculinity / Fatherhood**

Ratele, Shefer, and Clowes (2012) note that father absence is attributed to a variety of reasons including the view that a larger number of men face premature death compared to women and they go through unemployment, poverty, gender power, imprisonment, masculinity ideologies, and migration. Many South African families still face the absent father pressure in the post-apartheid era more than during apartheid (Bozalek, 2010). Ratele, Shefer, and Clowes (2012) conducted a study on South African fathers with a critical examination of men's constructions and experiences of fatherhood and fatherlessness. The findings of this research were obtained from qualitative interviews with a sample of 29 males. The results of the study illustrate how important social father figures and male relatives are in fathering boys and young men

in South Africa, as most of the respondents were raised by their social fathers. Literature on absent fatherhood in South Africa provides scholarly context for this study.

### **1.6.3 Matrilocality and Feminine Resilience**

According to Sacramento, Silva, and Goncalves (2014), the concept of matrilocality refers to a family structure where mothers play a central role in the domestic sphere and the father is either absent or assumes an intermittent and residual role. Matrilocality coincides with female monoparentality. In the South African context, matrilocality was originally a result of the migrant labour system as the majority of men were residing in the urban areas leaving women, children, and the elderly in homelands. With due time, men in urban areas became used to the Western way of life in the single-sex camps and they did not want to settle in homelands again—therefore leaving women to dominate in the homelands (Hall & Posel, 2019). A survey by Statistics South Africa in 2018 shows that 43.1 % of children in South Africa live with their mothers (Statistics SA, 2018). This has a propensity to create a culture of female-headed households as a dominant form of household in South Africa. The experience and legacy of apartheid made women more resilient to the challenges they face, and the continued pattern of absent father households in post-apartheid South Africa with its many social-economic challenges show the toughness and strength of South African single mothers.

According to Masten (2001), feminine resilience is considered a way females adjust to the significant challenges that threaten to disrupt culturally aligned normative development. In South Africa, women are vulnerable to gender-based violence, poverty, female-headed households, and HIV infections. However, they are resilient despite all the above-mentioned challenges and others (Mitchell, 2006). Jefferis and Theron (2018) conducted a systematic analysis entailing a qualitative synthesis of the resilience of women and girls in South Africa, and the results of the study indicated that resilience-supporting structures for women and girls are cultivated through positive relationships that include emotional and pragmatic support.

Culture and identity form part of children's development and formation of character and behaviour. Marcia (1996) views identity as an internal and self-constructed dynamic structure of attitudes and beliefs. Identity development is affected by factors

such as religion, gender, social status, and social and cultural factors. Family plays an important part in influencing the identity formation of a child. The South African White Paper on Families describes the family as “A societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or ties to marriage and go beyond a particular physical residence” (Amoateng & Richter, 2007: 4). However, due to factors that affect families, there is a high rate of single-mother families, whereby children grow in an absent father family. Thus, children from single-mother families often go through an identity crisis in their adolescent stage as compared to children from two-parent families (Nduna, Kasese-Hara, Ndebele & Pillay, 2011).

#### **1.6.4 Media Discourse of Single Mothers and Female-Headed Households**

According to Magnuson and Berger (2009), there is a transition from two-parent families to single-parent families that contributes primarily to the worldwide rise of single-mother families. In recent decades, the rising prevalence of single mothers has gained tremendous media attention as a result of the widespread absence of fathers. The media portray single motherhood as without spousal support, irresponsible, and raising children in an unsafe environment (Bergnehr & Henriksson, 2020). The concept of single motherhood in the media is rooted around unsustainability, dependency culture, social security, irrational motivation, and often the object of negative viewpoint. In the South African context, the media theme around single mother focus on how the Child Support Grant (CSG) provides women with the irrational motivation to become pregnant (Makiwane, Desmond, Richter & Udjo, 2006).

In-depth reviews of the literature on the above themes are discussed in subsequent chapters of the literature review.

#### **1.7 The role theory**

The theoretical framework forms the second part of the scholarly context of this research. It connects the researcher to existing literature, provides philosophical assumptions that guide the research, and deepens the essence of the study (Caliendo & Kyle, 1996). This study adopted three theories namely; post-coloniality, the intersectional burden of femininity, and media framing. The following sections are introductory previews of the theoretical framework of this research that is discussed in chapter four.

### **1.7.1 Post-Coloniality**

Post-colonialism is a theory that relates to the political, cultural, and economic legacies of colonialism (and apartheid) with the focus being on the human consequences of power and control of colonized nations by the Europeans. Post-colonialism tries to reveal unequal development and differential experiences on historically disadvantaged nations, races, communities, and people often as a result of colonial encounters and structures (Bhabha, 1994). The history of absent fatherhood and single motherhood has roots in South Africa's colonial encounters and their post-colonial legacies.

### **1.7.2 Intersectional Burden of Femininity**

The intersectional burden of femininity is the second theoretical frame for this study. This frame is important in understanding the different oppression and burdens that black women go through and in the analysis of various waves of feminism. Historically in South Africa, the double shift of women was a result of the industrialization and the migrant labour law in the apartheid days, whereby men were taken away from rural areas to work in the urban areas leaving women to handle all the domestic activities as well as child-care. This theoretical frame is largely drawn from the works of Arlie Hochschild (1989), Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Bell Hooks (1981), Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), and Patricia Hill Collins (2000).

### **1.7.3 Media Framing**

The third theoretical frame used in this study is media framing theory. Media framing is frequently manifested by the selection of keywords, key phrases, and images that reinforce a particular representation of reality and a specific emotion toward it, while omitting other elements that could suggest a different perspective or elicit a different sentiment (Entman, 1993). When approaching the framing theory from the angle of single motherhood and female-headed households in South Africa it is important to look at how the media present and represent these issues.

## **1.8 Background to the research methodology**

To address the purpose and objectives of this study, a qualitative research approach was used. A qualitative research approach is used to gain a greater understanding of

the perceptions of people regarding a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). A qualitative research methodology has a high possibility of yielding in-depth information which helps archive the aim and objectives of a study (Merriam, 2009). Thus, qualitative research allowed the researcher to explore if the media acknowledge women's resilience in single-mother stories. To archive, the objectives of this study, archival media material (i.e., documentary film) were used for qualitative data purposes. The documentary film title was "*Last Grave at Dimbaza*" and was produced in South Africa in 1976. The main goal of the film was to expose apartheid-era oppression of black people and the experience of the black family as captured during apartheid South Africa.

The documentary film was supported by an analysis of media articles in South African newspapers. Whilst the documentary film provided historical colonial-apartheid data on absent fatherhood, the media articles provided data relating to current discourses of single mother households in South Africa today.

The data were analyzed using postcolonial critical discourse analysis as articulated by Sabido (2016). Ruth Sabido's Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA) provides a useful approach to the analysis of media content by focusing on the postcolonial relations of power, social inequality, race, and gender discrimination that underpin the production of content.

The methodology chapter addresses the research method used in this study in detail.

### **1.9 Significance of the study**

It is anticipated that the study will contribute to and expand the existing body of knowledge on women's resilience in matrifocal families and establish if this resilience forms part of media discourses about single-mother households. The study will also assist readers to understand the media representation or narrative of single motherhood. It will further help the reader understand how past events influence today's social issues and break the stereotypes attached to female-headed households. Furthermore, this study will challenge the current and existing literature on the topic of female-headed households in South Africa.

Lastly, it will assist in understanding the effects of social and political history on black family structure and their consequences in South Africa today.

## 1.10 Overview and the structure of the research

**Chapter 1:** This chapter provides the introduction and background of the study.

**Chapter 2:** This is the first chapter of the literature review. It covers the effect of colonialism and apartheid on black families in South Africa.

**Chapter 3:** This is the second chapter of the literature review. It covers absent masculinity, matrifocality, and feminine resilience.

**Chapter 4:** This chapter addresses the theoretical framework of the study. It provides a basic understanding of post-coloniality, the intersectional burden of femininity, and how the media frames events, people, and issues.

**Chapter 5:** This chapter covers the methodological approach used during data collection and analysis to address the research objectives.

**Chapter 6:** This is the first chapter of the data presentation and findings. It presents data and findings from the documentary film, "*Last Grave at Dimbaza*". In this chapter, I explored how the documentary film presents the experiences of black families during apartheid, and how these experiences shape the intergeneration trend of absent fatherhood in South Africa.

**Chapter 7:** This is the second chapter on data presentation and findings. It presents data and the findings from the archival media materials (online newspaper articles). In this chapter, I analyzed how stories about single mothers are framed, I examined the representation of single-mother households based on the framing of the media stories.

**Chapter 8:** This chapter summarises the entire study and provides recommendations and concludes the study.



## CHAPTER 2

### COLONIALISM AND APARTHEID ON BLACK FAMILIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

#### (LITERATURE REVIEW)

*“The past has never died. It is not even past. It is part of the present and if we are to overcome it, we need to understand whence it came.”*

William Faulkner (1929: 57)

#### 2.1 Introduction

South Africa today is a result of its past. To understand the present absent masculinity and feminine resilience in South Africa, one needs to trace the country's history and the entanglement it has in shaping modern South African society (Terreblanche, 2002). This chapter reflected on pre-colonial and pre-apartheid South Africa, tracing the family structures before the birth of colonial and apartheid policies and their implication on the present family structure in South Africa. The chapter further reviewed the literature relevant to the topics and themes for this study. Therefore, resources such as books, published journals, and research articles were reviewed on pre-colonial African families, colonialism and African families, apartheid, and the African families.

#### 2.2 PRE-COLONIAL AFRICAN FAMILIES

Some most seasoned proof indicated that life started in South Africa (Clark & Worger, 2011). Over 20,000 pre-historical times the human culture that was found in South Africa is alluded to as the Khoisan public, they spread over Southern Africa and lived in a mix of chasing and fishing with a band of 18-20 related relatives. Over the past two millennia, gatherings of cultivators from the Bantu public known as Africans from West Africa started to spread over the pieces of South Africa (Clark & Worger, 2011). The Bantu of South Africa belongs to the Southern Bantu and they are divided into four main groups that consist of several tribes, namely: the Nguni tribe consisting of the Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, and Swazi, the Sotho tribe consisting of the Southern Sotho, Western Sotho, and Northern Sotho, the Venda and the Shangana Tsonga.

The Bantu family was involved in the land that got enough precipitation for cultivation and chased wild quarry for food to meet their means (Ehret, 1972).

Despite cultivating, Africans were additionally herders with the ownership of steers that dwarfed the number of inhabitants in people which influenced their economy, diet, the overall set of laws, and customs. The consideration of domesticated animals was in the hand of the male populace as steers were the tribesmen's abundance since they were a vehicle of trade, even more particularly in a type of marriage introduction to the bride's family (Bundy, 1979).

### **2.3 The Traditional Bantu Family Structure Prior to The Arrival of the Europeans**

The tribes were similar to each other and demonstrated a marked degree of cultural cohesion, which nonetheless allowed them to establish a general narrowly outlined a pattern of characteristics of the family in the traditional Bantu society (Steyn & Rib, 1968). In the Bantu society, the family played a significant role in social organisation. The family was the largest social unit which was formed by a marriage between a man and his wife, children, and other relative members of the family. The families were patriarchal, patrilocal, patrilineal, and polygamous. Patriarchal families include newly married sons living with their parents under the authority of the head of the house. This type of homestead was a function of poverty and culture (Oppong, 1997). Each family had its household possessions and huts. However, in the case of polygynous families, each wife had her hut on the family homestead. Even though the homestead varied in size and composition they consisted of a range of relative members and households that are connected through the father's lineage (Kuper, 1982).

The Bantu families in South Africa were organised in specific ways. Similarly, to Bundy (1979), Mayer & Mayer (1974: 271-273) shed light on the family unit structure when describing the kin structure of the Xhosa-speaking people within the Eastern Cape, where grandparents played the role of mother and father, while the biological parents took the roles of older sister and brother. Families were arranged in lineages and it is possible to consider these as a series of concentric circles, with the relations at the core. Also, the study of Siqwana-Ndulo (1998) on rural African family structure within the village of Ngcingwane in the Eastern Cape found that the majority of households

were more extended with the entire family inhabitation as a collective. The homestead is linked to the cattle that ran through the main house and this was the men's territory, the ancestors and cattle and women were opposed to the cattle (Hammond-Tooke, 1962).

In addition, the cattle were an eruptive form of wealth and as a result, their political affiliations were limited to their village. Also, as a result of the eruptivity of cattle the cattle were the most valued asset as they were the medium of bride wealth payment. As mentioned above, the Bantu history lies in the contrast between cattle and agriculture, the Bantu homesteads cluster was in a middle zone with convenient access to upland sourveld for summer grazing and lowland sweetveld for winter use (Hall & Mack 1983).

Although the homesteads structure of the Bantu varied in size, position, and meaning they had similar characteristics. Below is an example of a traditional Nguni homestead in the Nguni village. See figure 2.1

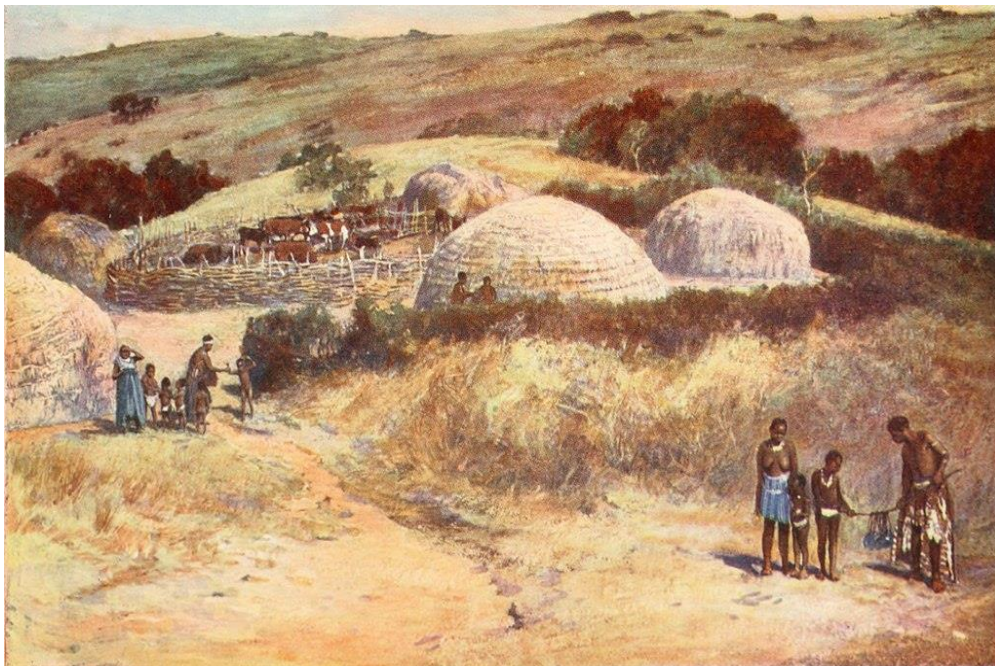


Figure 2.1: A traditional Nguni homestead in South Africa

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## 2.4 Marriage and Custom

Since the family was considered important in the Bantu society, marriage was also considered important. Also, they regarded marriage as an institution for the production of legitimate children. and for powerful families marriage was a political act and wealth

(Gluckman, 1950). As mentioned earlier that cattle were valued for bride wealth payment, and it also played an important role in the marriage institution. The basic bride wealth rule was that privileges were passed to a woman and her children in return for cattle payment. Therefore, the man's family is expected to pay *lobola* to the woman's family in a form of goods transfer usually in cattle. The Bantu family viewed *lobola* as a sign of thanksgiving with the exchange of cattle for the bride (Russell, 2003).

#### Preferential marriage

The marriage pattern among the Bantu complied with certain rules, the preferential marriage was dominated among the Sotho tribe as exogamy was adhered to. However, amongst the Nguni tribe, there was a strict ban on preferential marriage, especially for persons who belonged to the same lineage (Steyn & Rip, 1968).

#### *Cross-cousin marriage*

Cross-cousin marriages are the preferential norm in societies where the rule of exogamy is adhered to. In this type of marriage young men are allowed to marry their mother's brother's (*Malome*) daughter and it is strongly recommended among the Bapedi group of the Sotho tribe (Kuper, 1975). The Sotho favoured the matrilateral marriage of the first cousin (when a man marries the daughter of his mother's brother) and the patrilateral marriage of the first cousin (when a man marries the daughter of his father's sister), so the bride is not a stranger but a member of the extended family. This marriage pattern because it meant that "*dikgomo di boela sakeng*" meaning that cattle will return to the same kraal and the family kraal will not be lost to strangers (Matjila, 2009).

Bothma (1962) revealed in a study of the Northern Transvaal Sotho Tribe that six percent of Ntshabeleng men were married to their first cousins. Nonetheless, among the Nguni, cross-cousin marriages were prohibited, excluding the Swazi who allowed marriage between children who share a common grandparent (Kuper, 1982).

## Prescribed marriage

### *Levirate*

According to Pans (1989), a *levirate* is a form of marriage in which the younger brother of the deceased husband is obliged to marry the widow. This type of marriage exists in societies where exogamy is not prevalent. Among the Sotho, the Venda, and the Shagana Tsonga, *Levirate* ensured that the widow does not return home. Rather she had to remain with the family of her husband and be acquired by the brothers of her husband to bear children for the family. In the latter case, the children would be looked upon as the legitimate children of the deceased husband. Furthermore, *Levirate* consists of two types; Junior and senior *Levirate*. Junior *Levirate* existed as a form of marriage of inheritance by the son of the deceased. In this case, the oldest son will inherit some of the minor wives of his father while the husband's younger brothers inherit the mother. Senior *Levirate* is when the marriage takes place between the widow and the elder brother of the deceased.

Okorie (1995) points out that levirate marriages provided a way of protecting the widow and children as it was meant to ensure stability and that the widow and her children did not form part of other families nor live in poverty. The *Lerivate* union is therefore beneficial in safeguarding the interest of fatherless children and widows as the brothers of the deceased are obliged to care for the widow left with children, land, and herd. In addition, the children are regarded as the children of the deceased father when the marriage has taken place more children are reared. This system assumed full responsibility for providing domestic, economic, and material support for women and children.

### *Sororate*

According to Bekke and Buchner-Eveleigh (2017), when a married woman died or was infertile, the family of the husband had the right to approach the bride's family for a substitute, and this marriage union is referred to as *Sororate*. The *Sororate* is a marriage model that is allowed when the wife of the man is dead. The widower would then obtain the third sister of the wife. *Sororate* happens only if the wife dies early, for otherwise, the man would marry the sister. Similar to *Levirate*, *Sororate* existed in two forms; junior *Sororate* whereby the husband of the deceased wife marries her wife's younger sister and senior *Sororate* whereby the husband of the deceased marries the

wife's older sister. The *Sororate* existed among the Sotho tribe, however, did not exist among the Nguni.

## **2.5 Type of Marriage**

### *Polygamy*

According to Barnes (1951), polygamy is a type of marriage that involves one man marrying more than one woman. In a group of Baganda of Uganda, polygyny was dictated by the quality of the general public and the pattern of the social association of the conventional African family (Barnes, 1951). In South African Bantu tribes and among the Nguni tribe, polygamous marriages were central to women's economic independence as each wife had her garden and grain storage place (Bundy, 1979). The probability of having more than one wife also existed for Shangana Tsonga men, as several families were considered polygamous. 'Extended families' have emerged in cases of polygamy, consisting of a group of nuclear families led by the same man.

*Sororal polygyny* is common and still prevalent among the Swazis and Zulus of the Nguni tribe. It explains that a man is not forced to wait for the death of his wife to marry her younger sister in a sororal polygyny. When she is of marriageable age, he asks for her hand. This would allow him to marry several sisters at a time. Generally, high bride price rates contribute to difficulties in securing partners and this leads to sororate marriage. In the case of the death of the wife, the deceased wife's younger sister is offered to her husband as compensation for his loss by the wife's family.

## **2.6 Economy of Bantu Tribe**

The Bantu tribes were engaged in agriculture, hunting, and simple manufacturing. Family, marriage, and homesteads were rooted in economic, religious, and political institutions. The institution of marriage formed part of the economic motive as polygamous marriages were important for labour in the fields. In addition, as livestock and crop farming were means of survival among the Bantu tribe, having enough force was important. Economically, bride wealth paid in livestock linked the pastoral economy and garden of women because the livestock exchange for wives formed part of the economic transaction. According to Townshend (2008), men would marry more wives so that their wives and children formed part of their labour force. Therefore,

looking after cattle and ploughing fields would be easier when the labour force is shared amongst family individuals.

### **2.6.1 Work and Family**

The Bantu homestead was the essential nut for food production. The homestead exhibited only a small amount of specialization in labour and with a strict division of labour based on sex as each homestead was economically self-supported. Furthermore, agricultural production formed part of the economy and provided food for homestead, therefore, labour was intensive as the land was not scarce, and cultivation was extensive (Kuper, 2016). Women did most of the work in the field, among the Cape Nguni. Men cleared fields and broke hard grounds while women hoed, sowed, weeded, gathered, and threshed the crops. Children on the other side assisted in protecting the gardens from birds and animals. Aside from clearing the land men cared for livestock, built animal shelters of wood or stones, and made frames for the house—therefore labour comprised mainly if not only of family members (Bundy, 1979). To do away with the inequality of labour sex, marriage came in as a protective measure in which men shared their production with their wives. Marriage also led to economic cooperation between men and women ensuring the survival of every individual in the society.

## **2.7 COLONIALISM AND AFRICAN FAMILIES**

### **2.7.1 The Arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck in South Africa**

Jan van Riebeeck was a Dutch navigator, colonial administrator and the first commander of the Dutch Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC). “Van Riebeeck served the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) in Java, Sumatra, China, and Japan from 1639-1649, when he was recalled and fined for trading on his private account in Batavia” (Jaffe, 1994: 380).

The VOC established its post at Table Bay (Cape of Good Hope) which by then was inhabited by the Khoisan. The Khoisan is a collective term for two indigenous groups in South Africa: the Khoikhoi, who kept livestock and sheep, and the San, who were hunter-gatherers. The VOC and the Dutch East India Company settled in Table Bay for their economic interest in South Africa for them to have economic control of the

country. The VOC was therefore anxious to avoid costly wars at the Cape (Magubane, 2001).

In 1652 Jan van Riebeeck arrived and settled in the Cape of Good Hope and used his experience as a trafficker and corrupter in Tonkin, China, Japan, and Nagasaki to build up a DEIC trading post and slave colony in the Cape and ensured that the Khoisan population was treated with respect and that their cultural legitimacy and socio-economic sustainability was not disrupted by other Dutch population whom already settled in the Cape (Jaffe, 1994). However, Jan van Riebeeck failed to follow the policy when the Dutch independent farmers arrived and started a war of plunder with the Khoisan in 1659. After the war Jan van Riebeeck told the Khoikhoi leader Harry the Strandloper or Autshumao of the Goringkaikona tribe that there were not enough pasture land cattle available for both the colonists and the Khoikhoi. Then the Austumao said; *“if the country is too small, who has the greater right; the true owner or the foreign intruder?”*.

Jan van Riebeeck recorded his answer in his diary; *“we have won this country in just a manner through a defensive war and we intend to keep it”* (Lelpoldt, 1938). Van Riebeeck’s response was seminal and was, thus, the beginning of a colonial process of land deprivation that continued for more than 250 years and sparked many violent conflicts accompanied by slavery. In 1910 the Union of South Africa divided the land as many black tribes were forced off their land by the British colonists. “This mechanism resulted in the 1913 Land Act, the Urban Area Act of 1923, which set aside only eight percent (8%) of South Africa’s land area as native reserves, while putting in place the policy of segregation that would later be replaced with the policy of apartheid in 1948” (Terreblanche, 2002: 155). Thus, this details how the Khoisan and the Bantu tribe lost their land and freedom to the European colonists.

### **2.7.2 BEGINNING OF THE MINING INDUSTRY AND THE AFRICAN FAMILY**

The arrival of the British industrial-capitalist revolution in South Africa brought several changes such as the industrial revolution, which brought about a dramatic change in socio-economic transition, and a paradigm shift in African family life was among these developments. Before the industrial mineral revolution, that is, before 1870, South Africa’s economy was centered on agriculture, the paper therefore dated as far as the mineral revolution.



Colonial policies and laws that were made by the colonial government made Africans powerless in their land and deliberately eroded the traditional African family structure (Welsh, 2009). According to Amoateng & Ritther (2007), the change in the African family structure was facilitated through mechanisms such as land expropriation, political disenfranchisement of most of the indigenous population, and industrial development. These developments brought the institutionalisation of racism through the segregation policy which restricted the life chance of non-white while white people were given advantages in all critical areas such as agriculture, education, health care, housing, and employment (Clark & Worger, 2011).

The exploration of diamonds and gold in the 1880s did not only bring a dramatic economic explosion but also commenced a period of social and political transformation in South Africa (Gelderblom & Kok, 1994). According to Savage (1986), the rapid growth of the mineral industry attracted a large scale of foreign capital as South Africa became the largest supplier of gold in the world and therefore required vast amounts of labour for this to be profitable. To have access to cheap labour amongst the Africans, the government of the day in the 1870s and 1880 imposed cash taxation demands and established discriminatory practices and laws. As far as the laws benefited the British in acquiring cheap labour from native Africans, it disrupted the African family structure (Clark & Worger, 2011). According to Okoth-Ogendo (1989), the colonial-imposed restrictions affected the family life and household formation patterns in society, especially in African societies. Below are the laws that were imposed on African people and how they affect the family institution.

### **2.7.2.1 The Native Land Act of 1913**

To maintain the migrant labour system various measures and policies were planned by the government to force more African people into the system. The Native Land Act 27 of 1913 was one of the acts drawn from the segregation policy adopted by the South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC) to limit African ownership of land (Clark & Worger, 2011). The 1913 Land Act limited Africans' access to land for the reserves which comprised less than 8% of the country (Allen, 1992). The introduction of Schedule Native Area was one of the strategies included in the Native Land Act to absorb all the African reserves that had been established across the country (Feinbery, 1993).

The creation of the Schedule Native Area explained the boundaries of African reserves, it stated that Africans could no longer purchase land or lease land outside the scheduled areas unless purchasing land from another African. Thus, White farmers were also prohibited from leasing or buying land from Africans. Furthermore, the act put a stop to squatting by Africans on white-owned land and promoted segregation and agricultural labour in white-owned farms and mining industries.

In his book, *Native Life in South Africa*, Sol Plaatje analyzed the devastating outcomes that black farmers bore as a result of the Native Land Act of 1913 in the Free State, and how the state strategically drove Africans out of the land of abundance they occupied and cultivated. Plaatje traced the brutality and hurting imposed on African peasants:

“The baas have exacted from him the services of himself, his wife, and his oxen, for wages of 30 shillings a month, whereas Kgobadi had been making over £100 a year, besides retaining the services of his wife and his cattle for himself. When he refused the extortionate terms, the baas retaliated with a Dutch note, dated the 30th day of June 1913, which ordered him to 'betake himself from the farm' of the undersigned, by sunset of the same day, failing which his stock would be seized and impounded, and himself handed over to the authorities for trespassing on the farm” (Plaatje, 1916: 87).

Thus, the Native Land Act was passed by the Parliament to ensure that Africans had no other option for survival, thus, forcing African farmers to work in an overcrowded location with poor sanitation in the mining sector.

#### **2.7.2.2 The impact of Native land on African families**

The Native Land Act of 1913 (Act 27 of 1913), which prohibited, amongst other things, the ownership of land by Africans had a devastating effect on African farmers and families (Modise & Mtshiselwa, 2013). Similar, to Sol Plaatje's work, Bundy (1979) in *'The rise and fall of the African peasantry'*, outlined the importance of land ownership by African farmers. Furthermore, Bundy indicated how the involvement of African peasants in the wider economy was important for providing economic efficiency to their households. The loss of land meant that African farmers lost their only means of

income and poverty became a cruel reality for them and their families (Letsoalo, 1987). Subsequently, women, children, the elderly, and those with disabilities bore the greatest burden of poverty accompanied by pain, destitution, humiliation, and squalidness (Terreblanche, 2002: 384).

Due to their physical hunger and taxation pressure, Magubane and Lee (1983) highlight that the migrant labour system became the only option for indigenous African men to support their families to avoid hardship and pay the elders of the tribe a tribute tax from their salaries. This meant that many sons, fathers, husbands, and brothers became absent in the household for an increasingly longer period, leaving their wives and children vulnerable to working at the surrounding white-owned farms in the rural reserves. Although the migrant labour indeed helped African people to escape poverty in rural areas, African family lives became fractured as the state systematically held the power to decide where they resided, with who, and under which state (Rabe, 2006). O’Laughlin (1998:5-6) argues that the dismantling of African families’ decision powers led to families not having any other option than to remain in the rural reserves as the government set laws that control the movement of African people.

Thus, the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1937 limited African ownership of land and houses in urban areas. Such laws made it impossible for African families to travel as a family unit to the urban industrial zone of the migrant labourer (Gelderblom & Kok, 1994). The Native Laws Amendment Act imposed that women and children were forced by law to remain in the rural reserves. Allen (1992) assumes that poverty, and legal and land taxation traps that were imposed on African men add to the devastating effects on the African families. In this context, the system was established to restrict African land ownership, additionally increase hut taxations, and regulated their movement between rural reserves and urban areas.

### **2.7.2.3 Forced Removals**

The forced removal of black people from their ancestral land to various regions was one of the most humiliating experiences in South African history (Kgatla, 2013). In the book titled *‘The Surplus People’* which referred to black people who were forcibly removed from their land, Platzky and Walker (1984) wrote about the forceful removals of black people from their place of birth. The authors reported that about 3.5 million

South Africans, including millions of black people, were forcibly removed from their homes and dumped in barren and uninhabitable remote areas from 1960 to 1982. According to Pilger (2007), thousands of children died while their families were moved and exposed to harsh conditions.

The native (Black) population was moved to the Bantustan reserves namely, Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei to prevent them from residing in urban areas (Davenport & Saunders, 2000). The Bantustans were the administrative measures for the removal of African people in the white South African areas. Blacks were therefore assigned to different homelands across the county according to their varying cultures. However, Bantustans were not economically developed, mainly with overcrowding and poor facilities while the farmlands were in a poor condition with overgrazed grounds due to soil erosion which made farming difficult (Butler, Rotbery & Adams, 1978).



Figure 2.2: Force removal in Kammaskraal women and children waiting to board a government truck  
UCT Libraries Digital Collections

#### **2.7.2.4 The impact of force removals and their impact on black families**

The forced removals were put to separate public facilities for whites and non-whites. For example, non-whites who resided in the center of Johannesburg were forcibly removed to Soweto. These forced removals resulted in the disruption of black family

lives (Henrard, 1996). According to Kuper (2016), the forced removals of the population into the reserved homelands did not support agricultural production and thus put most black family structures under extreme strain as black families depended on agricultural production for survival. Bank (1994) notes that the forced removals of black families also impacted the institution of marriage as many mothers were left unmarried due to forced removals.

### **2.7.3 The Migrant Labour System**

In all regions of the world, the migrant labour system has played a significant role. For example, “In Western Europe the Mexicans assisted in harvesting in California in the United States of America; the harvesting of sugar-cane in the Argentine by the Bolivians, who moved between Shanghai and rural areas of China” (Wilson, 1972:120-143). In West Africa, the peanut growing area in Gambia, cocoa farms in Ghana, and cotton picking in Nigeria drew a large scale of migrants. The migrant labour system became a phenomenon in South Africa as well, it played an important role in the growth of the country’s economy. But it also had a devastating effect on the African family structure. The migrant labour system in South Africa existed for a long time, one hundred years ago, a decade before the birth of the gold mining industry in Witwatersrand, decades before the evolution of apartheid politics—the mechanism through which men oscillated between their homes in some rural areas and their workplace was already firmly developed as part of the traditional way of life of the country (Wilson, 1972).

The migrant labour system was established some years after the Europeans used the agricultural sector to grow the economy. This system of oscillating migration included a large population of African adult males. This included single or married men unaccompanied by their wives and children, who had to leave their families in the homelands. These migrants were contacted to the employer for a strictly limited time of 6 months up to a year or two, living in single-sex compounds and hostels (Magubane & Lee, 1983).

In response to the high demand for African labour in the mining sector, the state introduced intimidating policies to encourage labour migration (Viljoen, 1994). The hut tax measures forced African men to trade their labour to the colonialists to increase their economic activities and meet the tax imposed on them. The tax was one of the

strategies instituted by the state to force African men to participate in the migrant labour system. This tends to be a pattern of the colonial capitalist system where indigenous livelihood and family structures were destroyed to recruit indigenous people for the colonialist economic system. For example, Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) highlight that in Sierra Leone, the Europeans evicted people's lands and left them with no other means of survival than working for colonialists unwillingly through the introduction of the hut tax.

Also, some communities in Northern Nigeria had to pay taxes to their rulers, it could be in cash or kind, for example, livestock and palm oil. In South Africa, the Europeans established Land Acts such as Act 27 of 1913 and Act 18 of 1936 that denied African ownership of land to continue with subsistence farming and declared squatter farming illegal, which contributed to the fall of African agricultural production. This was one of the recommendations drawn from the segregation policies adopted by the South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC) to increase the involvement of African people in the migrant labour system (Clark & Worger, 2011).

However, the steady rapid participation of African people in the migrant labour system cannot only be attributed to state measures but also other factors that could be identified. May (1990) notes that poverty and loss of cattle due to grazing grounds played an important role in encouraging African people into the migrant labour system. The state used recruiting organizations like the Witwatersrand Native Recruiting Corporation to recruit African men from South African rural areas and neighbouring countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Mozambique to engage in migrant labour system and provide cheap labour (Omer-Copper, 1987).

The migrant labour system brought about the disruption of African family life and spatial fragmentation of the extended family network (Simkins & Dlamini, 1992). Africans who worked at the mines were treated as temporary residents in the industrial areas while their families were left in the arranged rural areas with limited resources. Women and children were regarded as a burden to men who worked at the mines, hence, they were forced to remain in the Bantustans. Africans were dehumanized and reduced to mere producers of manual labour for the benefit of mine corporations and the British colonists. The African family was considered a distraction to this racist

capitalist agenda. For example, Godfrey Lagden, the commissioner of the South African Native Affairs Commission stated commented that:

“A man cannot go with his wife and children and his goods and chattels on the labour market. He must have a dumping ground. Every rabbit must have a warren where he can live and burrow and breed and every Native must have a warren too” (Bundy, 1979: 242).

Therefore, the Bantustans were regarded as labour reservoirs and homes for people whose labour contributions were not required, the old, unfit, disabled workers and women with dependent children formed part of the surplus population (Platzky & Walker, 1985).

### **2.7.3.1 The impact of the migrant labour system on African families**

The migrant labour system in South Africa had a damaging effect on African family structure. Many Scholars have engaged this effect from various generations of scholarship (Smikins & Dlamini, 1992; Gordon, 1981; Van der Horst, 1942). The African families bore the brunt consequences of the migrant labour system in many ways. Due to the nature of the migrant labour system, many African men were separated from their families for a long period, some were only able to go home for a short period. On average migrants were given at least 14 to 18 paid days of leave each year to go home back to their rural homelands (Wilson, 1972). The effects of the migrant labour system on African families are infinite and complex.

According to Amoateng and Richter (2007), the absence of men led to avoidance of marriage, while in cases where the marriage has contracted the participation of the husband in the migrant labour system resulted in the formation of family patterns such as female-headed households, unstable household composition and out of wedlock births. Mashegoane (1990) argues that the marriage of the migrant worker became an institution than a relationship as the couples spent most of their time away from each other.

Harries (1994) portrays how the difficulties brought about by migrancy in Southern Mozambique were seriously felt by women and young men as they needed to take on all the work customarily completed by men. Both men and women were driven into marriages at an early age than before oppressive system to oblige to migrancy. Women

were caught in the function of loyalty because sexual unfaithfulness on their part would convert into the repaying of *Lobola*, which could monetarily demolish their families of orientation. Young men additionally endured the worst part of migrancy as they needed to take on adult duties at a young age. The migrant labour system` broke the African traditions, and, at times, new traditions were created.

Moreover, Harries (1994) notes that the participation of young boys in the migrant system became part of boys' way to manhood. The continuous absence of men in rural areas meant that women had to direct the gender socialisation of young men. The learning stage of masculinity and identity usually took place in rural areas. However, with the migrant labour system the stage was moved to the urban mining areas.

Smit (2011) explored the effects of labour migration on African families in South Africa, based on the findings of two qualitative research studies. An exploratory analysis of African people's understanding of the effect that apartheid had on their families is one of the qualitative research studies, while the second study is centered on the survival strategies of households in informal settlements in South Africa. Through the discussion centered on the two reports, Smit states that the migrant labour system had a major impact on family lives in South Africa. The conclusion of the study revealed that marital and family fragmentation and breakdown, insecurity, conjugal infidelity, and parental absenteeism were faced by African people participating in the migrant labour system.

## **2.8 APARTHEID AND AFRICAN FAMILIES**

Apartheid was a progression of colonialism in South Africa, the segregation policy called apartheid in South Africa officially started in the 1940s when the National Party gained power. This policy oppressed non-white people in South Africa and separated people by race, concerning the places they resided, where they worked, and attended school (Clark & Worger, 2011). Schensul (2009) asserts that the introduction of the apartheid policy was the logical extension of colonialism and prolongation of a sharpened type of segregation. The colonial government followed policies of racial segregation while the apartheid government followed policies of separation. However, the policies were similar although the apartheid policies were more developed than



the colonial policies. The apartheid policies also continued to destroy the African family life in different ways. Giddens (2000) believes that these policies contributed to the changes in the relationship between husbands, wives, children, relative members of the family, and their kin.

### **2.8.1 The continuous of migrant labour system under apartheid and its impact on Black families**

Besides the disruption to the social structure of the village with the disastrous effects on the rural economy in terms of change and family composition, impoverishment of the soil due to men being away for a long period in response to the migrant labour system resulted in a variation in patterns of residence and socio-ecological growth (Wood, 1968). Under this policy, men were required to register for jobs in the mines through the labour bureau. When they secured employment in the urban areas, they had to leave their families as wives were rarely permitted to join men. Rather, women were forced to remain in the reserve and live precariously off the land (Oliver-Evans, 1992). With men in the urban areas, their women back in the rural reserves were forced to rear children without fathers under extremely adverse conditions. They were forced to provide agricultural labour on the barren land that almost made the field non-existent which increased frustration and family hardship.

Due to the migrancy contract, migrant men were forced to live in the single-sex hostel for a period of one to three years without visiting their families in the reserves. The strain of the separation caused many men to break ties with their rural families, and this resulted in poverty, destitution, childhood malnutrition, illegitimacy, and desertion in the rural homelands. Men also suffered the loneliness, pain, and despair of being away from their homes and many turned to alcohol as the only source of entertainment available in the urban areas (Harris, 1974).



Figure 2.3: Single-sex hostel Feix Dlangamandla

Breckenridge (1998) states that the environment in the mines was one of the brutalities men experienced, where black miners would be beaten daily by white shift leaders, creating a culture of violence among miners. Men were known as the head of the household in black culture. Thus, the treatment men received at work affected them when they got home trying to regain their place. Apartheid masculinities have thus been largely abusive, oppressive, and patriarchal. For these men, when they had limited control over other aspects of their lives, sexual violence was an outlet for their frustration and an assertion of their strength, as well as a means of control. In domestic violence, men beat their wives and children to regain their power and control (Hunter, 1992).

Although some migrant labourers had the permit to live with their families in the urban areas, the apartheid laws prevented the formation of extended households among African families through the Urban Area Acts of 1945 and the housing policy which promoted single-family houses of 3 to 4 rooms to accommodate nuclear families (Mazibuko, 2002). Furthermore, Welsh (2009) asserts that the act encouraged the transition of African extended family units to a more nuclear form as the Europeans believed that a family unit should consist of a mother, father, and children without any relative member. The colonial domination and influence affected the African family structure and led to what Steve Biko referred to as colonisation of the mind. Biko (2004) noted that African people were made to believe that a family structure should be in a nuclear form rather than the extended form as accommodation in black urban areas was structured in a nuclear unit.

Moreover, as a result of the lack of accommodation for the migrant labourers' families, squatter camps were provided for Africans in the urban area with resource inadequacies such as lack of clean running water, lack of electricity, and poor sanitary conditions, and poor health services. The townships were overcrowded with widespread poverty which was reflected in the extensive malnutrition, diseases, and high infant mortality. The infant mortality rate was five times that of the white population. As a result, graves were dug in advance anticipating the number of infant deaths that will take place during a given month. Women in the homelands also suffered tremendous emotional hardships in addition to economic and child-rearing without the support of their husbands. Economic hardships experienced by women in homelands also forced women to seek employment in nearby white farms to sell their domestic labour to their 'white madams'. Thus, mothers were forced to leave their children with relatives (grandparents and aunts) in the rural homelands while they stayed in the white homes with little time off to visit their children (Sihna, 1982).

In cases where the wife and husband worked in the same area, they were not allowed to stay together as it was illegal for African men to live with their wives. Meanwhile, the children of this kind of couples children remained in the rural homelands as they were considered unnecessary appendages by the white racist regime. Therefore, black mothers were denied the right to be with their children as the apartheid laws did not permit them to live with their children in their quarters even if they happened to be infants.

## **2.9 The Mixed Marriage Act No 55 of 1949 and Immorality Act No 21 of 1950**

The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1950 were among the countless laws that gave voice to apartheid, the tactic of separating the various race classes (Sofer, 1949). These two pieces of legislation had the effect of defining legal discrepancies between races and unlawful marriage and sexual intercourse between Europeans and non-Europeans (Thompson, 1990). Furthermore, Jacobson, Amoateng, and Heaton (2011) note that the police frequently followed people to see whether they were sleeping with individuals of other designated races, particularly Africans and Coloured people. In the early hours of the morning, couples were awakened by the police to review their identification documents to ensure that the partners they were sleeping with are of the same race.

Du Pre (1994) points out that even when people of a different race were traveling together in the same car the police would arrest them on suspicion of breaking the immorality act. In addition to the formal punishments of harsh prison sentences, police coercion, and abuse for breaching the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts, their families, acquaintances, and culture suffered alienation from mixed couples.

### **2.9.1 The impact of Mixed Marriage and Immorality act on families**

Many Coloured children in South Africa whose parents were mixed-race (White and African), were smuggled out of the country to grow up in exile, in England or Germany because being a mixed race under apartheid laws was prohibited (Noah, 2016).

In his book '*Born a Crime*' Trevor Noah shared his experiences of being born coloured under apartheid (Noah, 2016). Noah's mother was from Africa (Xhosa) while his father was White (Swiss) and under the immorality act, they had committed a crime that prohibits interracial sexual relations and gave birth to an interracial (Coloured) child. Noah (2016) notes that it was difficult for him and his parents to stay together as a family because of several laws that ensured racial separation together with immortality. This was because his parents would be jailed for five years if the police found out about him. In other words, he would have served as evidence of his parents' criminality. Furthermore, Trevor was not supposed to be seen in public with his mother. As a result, his mother would ask the coloured lady who lived near them to pretend to be Trevor's mother while she pretend to be the coloured lady's maid whenever they went to the park. It was important for Trevor's mother to hide him from the police because if the police found that she lived with a coloured child they would have taken Trevor to a coloured orphanage.

Noah (2016) asserts that being a child of colour in his Black family in Soweto was difficult in that he could not play with his Xhosa cousins because of the fear of being taken away by the police and his whole family being deported as a punishment of living with a Coloured child in a Black community. Moreover, Noah (2016) notes that he had to grow up in a house dominated by women because apartheid had taken his father away as he was White and himself (Trevor) was Coloured.

## **2.10 Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950**

The population registration act was the first act passed by the Nationalist government, as a mechanism for determining and registering the race of all. This act ensured that all South African residents were classified into racial categories such as 'White', 'Coloured, Black or Asian' (Horrell, 1979). Additionally, Bowker and Star (2000: 197) pinpoint that:

“When the Nationalists came into power in 1948, however, a much more detailed and restrictive policy, Apartheid was put into place. In 1950 two key pieces of legislation, the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act were passed. These required that people be strictly classified by racial group and that those classifications determine where they could live and work. Other areas controlled de jure by Apartheid laws included political rights, voting, freedom of movement and settlement, property rights, rights to choose the nature of one's work, education, criminal law, and social rights including the right to drink alcohol, use of public services including transport, social security, taxation, and immigration.”

The population registration act, as Posel (2001) has shown, became a powerful system of racial identification and classification. The system ensured that every individual in South Africa was classified according to their community acceptability. Furthermore, the introduction of the act has contributed to the breakdown of households as one individual could be classified as white within one family while another was classified as coloured.

### **2.10.1 How the population registration act separated families**

The population registration act separated families as a result of race classification. In Cape Town, a coloured family of Owen William, a South African top cricketer, was torn apart by this act. In Mogamadali's book *'More than a game*, the history of the Western Cape province cricket board 1959-1991 Williams shared his story about the population registration act and how it destroyed his family members' lives. Under this act, William's brother and sister were classified as whites while he and his other brother and sister were declared coloureds. Williams and his coloured siblings were separated from their mother and siblings who were moved to the white areas while he and his

other supposed coloured siblings remained in their coloured community. The coloured children were not allowed to visit their families in the white area because of their race (Oakes, 2016).

### **2.11 Group Area Act No 41 of 1950**

The group area act of 1950 was another “Fundamental pillar of apartheid that was intended to clear the so-called ‘black spots’ in both rural and urban areas” (Cell, 1982: 244). The act divided the country into geographical areas based on race. Under this act, non-white populations were pushed from the urban areas into disadvantaged rural areas. Also, the Group Area Act was intended to ensure that physical separation would enhance ethnic exclusiveness and thus guarantee divisions and subordinate groups (Magubane, 2001). Furthermore, Lephakga (2012: 22) pointed out that “This policy was used to relocate both urban and rural non-white”, and most South Africans were forced to live in their homelands because of this policy—which economically marginalized them. According to Fanon (1963), the idea of the Homelands was initialized to be generationally poor as the lands were not suitable for agricultural or pastoral work. Furthermore, Fenwick and Rosenhain (1991: 77) highlight that:

“All Africans were declared to belong to one of the 10 Bantustans, with native language and tribal origins as the deciding factor. In this way, Africans were deprived of citizenship in South Africa and instead became citizens of the designated homeland. Thus, they had no place or rights in South Africa but were simply regarded as migrant workers who, if unemployed, had to return to their Bantustan. The old, the young, and the dependent wives were “sent back” to the Bantustans and whole communities living in South Africa (in the black spots) were therefore forcibly uprooted and relocated.”

Similar to Fanon (1963), Terreblance (2002) notes that the Homelands were poverty-stricken and this consequently disadvantaged those living there because they had to abandon the homelands and look for job opportunities in white-owned areas. This had a terrible impact on the communal black family structure as families were broken due to the movement for job opportunities in the urban areas. Furthermore, this policy made it impossible for the whole family to migrate from their Bantustans to the urban. Rather families were condemned to a subsistence economy in the rural areas (Pietrse, 2004:47).

## **2.12 Pass Law of 1952**

While apartheid is very much linked with the pass laws under the National Party (1948-1994) policy, their origins could be traced to early colonial times and forced labour control rules. Slaves in the Cape Colony were forced to hold passes in the 1760s, To travel anywhere, signed by their owners. To strengthen the population registration act and the rise of the inflow of African people in the urban areas the Nationalist government established the system of passes or identity cards into practice (Welsh, 2009). The passes enabled the government to identify the population by race anywhere across the country. As black people were required to provide the passes when they traveled to white areas, this meant that black people, mostly men, were forced to always carry their passes (Breckenridge, 2014).

The passcard was later replaced with a *dompas* (reference book). “The *dompas* card reflected the photograph of a person, address, marital status, occupational record, lists of taxes paid, influx control endorsement and rural residential district, while race classification was reflected by the identification number” (Clark & Worger, 2005: 50). Although the pass law which was later known as influx control served a function to limit the access of Africans to urban areas, it also served as a mechanism for the bureaucratic allocation for labour in mining and agricultural industries (Welsh, 2009). According to Piotrowski (2019), the pass law was intended to control the black people’s movement in ‘the interest of social order’. This, therefore, denied Africans permanent residency in urban areas and channeled black labourers from the reserves to relocate with their families in the urban areas due to urbanisation. The pass law became the despised symbol of apartheid. Wood (1968) adds that the rigid system of influx control was intentionally designed to discourage the settlement of a large stabilized African-urban population with normal family patterns.

### **2.12.1 The impact of pass law on black families**

The pass law made it extremely difficult for African women to follow their husbands in the cities, it existed especially to prevent these women from relocating to urban areas and ensured that they remain in the rural areas (Wilson, 2011). The Native Urban Areas Consolidation Act passed in 1945 only allowed black people to stay in the urban area for a limited period of three days. According to Section 10 of this act, black people had to satisfy the following conditions to remain in a given urban area longer than three

days: “(1). one must have lived in the urban area since birth; (2). they must have served for one company for a period not less than ten years or had legally lived in the city for a period not less than fifteen years; and (3). they must have lived in the absence of fulfillment of the requirements referred to above. Thus, permission to stay in the metropolitan area had to be given by the officer responsible for the labour office” (Ogura, 1996: 412).

Ogura (1996) also notes that the state systematically destroyed African families by implementing this act because it limited black people, especially women and children, to reside in urban areas due to the conditions of the act. Due to the request of African labours, many African men continued to relocate to urban areas and this led to the establishment of townships which many African men occupied without their families which resulted in the deterioration of the African family system and unfaithfulness in marriages (Breckenridge, 1998).

Furthermore, Moodie (1994) notes that men in the mining environment became exposed to women who worked as domestic workers in the urban areas, who became sexual partners, prostitutes, girlfriends, mistresses and some even became wives, and men were, therefore, adulterers with two families. This resulted in illegitimate births, replacement of rural wives, and breaking up of tribal and societal values. Men continued living in single-sex hostels where wives and children were not allowed to stay or visit. Thus, men became used to living alone in the urban and the western way of life and did not want to reside in the rural reserves anymore.

## **2.13 Conclusion**

The chapter contains an overview of the pre-colonial African family structure and how the structure changed due to colonialism and apartheid. Pre-colonial African family structures were different from colonial families as indigenous people were independent in terms of food and agriculture, housing, and everything they needed for survival. They were more reliant on hunting and farming and they lived in extended family units than nuclear units. Furthermore, marriage was an important institution among the Nguni and Sotho-Tswana tribes in both economic and social aspects. The bride-wealth formed part of the economy as cattle were used for economic transactions between clans. While different marriage patterns and types ensured the begetting of legitimate children, they also formed labour forces within homesteads. However, the arrival of



Jan van Riebeeck in the Cape of Good Hope marked the rebirth of South Africa and the beginning of colonialism and mining industries which brought about social and economic transformational changes.

These changes were in a form of industrialization, law measures, and land expropriation that changed the African family structure from an extended unit to a nuclear unit. The introduction of the migrant labour system separated husbands from their families as they were forced to exchange their labour to pay for the hut taxes that the government imposed on them and escape poverty in the rural area. Although, the economy of the country grew massively black people bore the brunt of the economic changes while white people benefited. The birth of apartheid in 1948 was established to exploit black people even at the cost of completely disrupting the family life of black South Africans causing irreparable social and psychological damage. The family institution was broken due to the imposed brutal laws that shuttered black people and tore their families apart.

The introduction of acts such the forced removals, population registration, group area, labour migrant system, the abolition of the influx control, the mixed marriage act as well as the immorality act were intentionally established to exploit cheap labour from African men, promoting white supremacy and racial discrimination while breaking the traditional African family, social and economic structures. These acts separated families and changed the traditional value of the institution of marriage as the rate of marriage declined as a result of tax huts, migrancy, poverty, and unemployment. Furthermore, families were put under strain as women and children were stuck in the rural areas while menfolk stayed in single-sex hostels in urban areas alone being exposed to alcohol, poverty, violence, and crime. In the next chapter of this thesis, I will discuss absent masculinity, matrifocality, feminine resilience, culture, identity, and media discourse of single motherhood in South Africa.

## CHAPTER 3

### ABSENT MASCULINITY, MATRIFOCALITY, AND FEMININE RESILIENCE (LITERATURE REVIEW)

#### 3. Introduction

This chapter discusses the current nature of absent masculinity, intergenerational father absence, matrifocality, female-headed households, feminine resilience, and media discourse of single mothers. The chapter is divided into three sections; Section A examines the cultural aspect of fatherhood, Section B explores the literature on matrifocality and feminine resilience, and Section C reviews media narratives of single mother households in South Africa.

#### SECTION A: ABSENT MASCULINITY

Absent masculinity has been a social construct that is indicative of the absence of fathers in many South African households. There are many understandings of the social aspects of absent fatherhood. This section discusses the cultural aspect of fatherhood in South Africa.

##### 3.1 The cultural aspect of fatherhood

The notion of fatherhood in South Africa, as in many parts of the world, is coined with fathers being protectors and providers of their families. Often, fathers take their role of being head of the house and economic providers. This role is accompanied by power and the responsibility for the entire family, in the local *isiZulu* language it is reflected as “*Ubaba Walayikaya*” (Hunter, 2006: 101). On the other hand, African societies hold a different view of the definition of a father. They believe that being a father is not a result of the biological process, however, it is associated with kinship (social) ties more than paternity (Lesejane, 2006). In African societies such as in South Africa, there is a dominant conception of a social father as an ascribed rather than an achieved status. In a local Sepedi language, it is said that “*Ngwana ga se wa shete ke wa kgoro*”, meaning that sperm does not father a child rather a man becomes a father when he takes responsibility for his family (Lesejane, 2006).

The fatherhood title carries a lot of responsibilities and fulfillment of certain roles in the family and the practice of fatherhood continues to go through a political, economic, and social transformation in South Africa and Worldwide. Munroe (2008) notes that the above-mentioned transformations are somehow the root cause of father and masculinity absence in South African societies. According to Mkhize (2006: 186) “Fatherhood is intertwined with the process by which men come an understanding of who they are...[it] does not occur in a vacuum...[but] is informed by the dominant discourses of what it means to be a man in one’s society”. As a result, it could be asserted that fatherhood is linked to the social construction of masculinities (Mkhize, 2006). In light of this, Morrell (2006: 15) emphasizes that “The concept of fatherhood has always been associated with the presentation of masculinity in the sense that fathers are men and men have a gender identity known as masculinity.”

According to Connell (2002), the idea of masculinity suggests that men should behave in a certain way according to the definitions that see men as physically strong being that is responsible for defending and protecting the honour of their families, being providers, and remaining highly valued as well as being successful in everything that they attempt to do. Moreover, Davies and Eagle (2007) associate masculinity with being emotionally non-demonstrative, having status, being independent, and striving for dominance and power over women. Within this socially constructed system there exist certain masculinities that hold more power than others. These are what Connell (2002) refers to as hegemonic masculinity which marginalizes and dominates society.

The oppressive experiences of black men under apartheid led to a culture of hyper-masculinity among black men. For instance, Hong (2002) notes that the formation of hyper-masculinity was influenced by the harsh working conditions at the mines during the apartheid days, which is still evident in the post-apartheid era. The oppression and belittling of black men during apartheid created a pattern of powerlessness and social emasculation among black men. As a result, Khunou (2012) stresses that hyper-masculinity existed among black men as they had to try to overcompensate for their insecure gender identity under oppressive conditions by increasing their aggressiveness and violent behaviour to prove their masculinity. Arguably, fatherhood is central to appropriate constructions of masculinities (Datta, 2007). The social injunctive norms associated with masculinity and fatherhood that view fathers as providers often lead men to be absent in their families—fearing to seem to have failed

as men when they cannot provide for their families nor fulfill their roles as fathers. The father's presence is essential in a child's life as fathers are viewed as having the power to bring stability, and security and enforce discipline in their families. This leads to the next topic: The current nature of absent masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa.

### **3.2 The current nature of absent masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa**

A Father's absence at home creates a vacuum in a family and this phenomenon is linked to different meanings. "The first meaning refers to fathers who are physically absent from the homes where their children live post-divorce, resettlement, work or domestic instability" (Morrell & Richter, 2006: 18). The second meaning has to do with fathers being emotionally absent in their children's lives despite their presence or absence in the household (Morrell & Richter, 2006). However, for this study, the term 'absent fathers' is perceived as fathers who do not physically reside with their children, do not maintain communication, and do not offer emotional and financial support.

Padi, Nduna, Khunou, and Kholopane (2014) highlight that father-absence persists in post-apartheid from the end of apartheid in 1994. The exacerbation of the migrant labour system, industrialization, single-sex hostels, and urbanization, as discussed in the previous chapter, normalized fatherhood absence in black families in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2012). Researchers suggest that father-absence is particularly high in South Africa, following Namibia when being compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries and other parts of the world (McLanahan & Schwartz, 2002; Meintjies & Hall, 2010). According to the data collected by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) and the South African Race Relations Institute (SARRI), over 60% of children in South Africa are leaving without their fathers [Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and South African Race Relations Institute (SARRI), 2021].

Makofane (2015) argues that not all fathers want to be actively engaged or partake in their children's lives. For example, Morwe, Tugli, Klu, and Matshidze (2015) conducted a quantitative study on the establishment of fathers' involvement in their children's lives. Their study revealed that fathers appear to be a missing piece in children's upbringing

Richter and Smith (2006), explored children's views on fatherhood and their experiences of fathering in Soweto. The study was conducted in different schools that

varied in socioeconomic status and environment. Data was collected through essays written by children and responses from children to semi-structured questionnaires. The children's aspirations, feelings, observations, and disappointments about their fathers were revealed when they were asked questions about fatherhood. Overall, the findings indicated that socio-economic status is an obstacle in many families as a result fathers resort to being absent.

On the other hand, Freek's (2017) study focused on the response to the challenges of father absence and fatherlessness in South Africa using a qualitative approach with structured interviews as a data collection method. Samples of fathers were drawn from the North West Province, the primary goal of Freek's study was to find out what perspectives and personal observations fathers could provide for active and effective fathering. The findings of the study showed that growing up without a father figure is a disadvantage as it causes pain and suffering, and thus affects children's social functioning. Hence, children from fatherless households encounter identified problems.

### **3.3 Socioeconomic factors of father absence**

The current father's absence in South Africa is influenced by many factors and these factors limit fathers to fulfill their paternal responsibilities assigned to the fatherhood role. Apart from the legacy of the historical trend created by apartheid racist economic practices, socioeconomic factors also contribute to the South African context.

#### **3.3.1 Unemployment and poverty**

Unemployment frequently makes men feel insufficient because they struggle to fulfill the role of financial provider and breadwinner that is associated with the masculine role (Mncayi, 2016). While poverty remains the key factor of father absence in the country, the high level of unemployment among men becomes a central factor as well. Figure 3.1 illustrates the rate of men's unemployment in South Africa by population group.

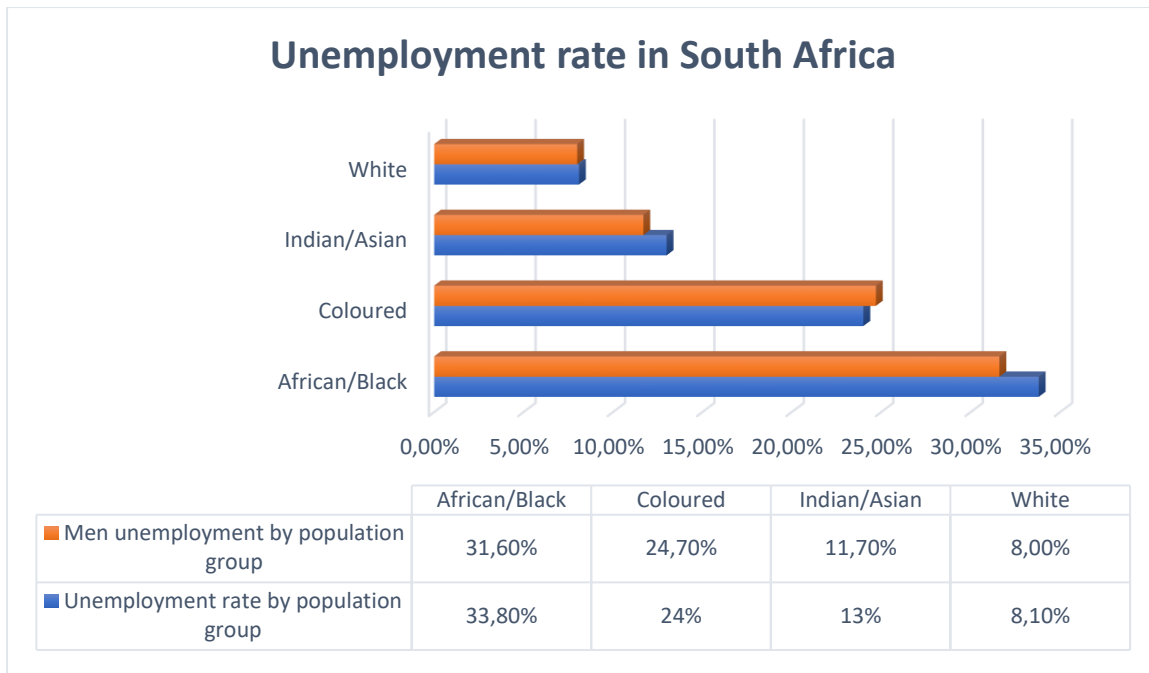


Figure 3.1: Male unemployment by population group Source: Statistics South Africa (QLFS Q1 2020)

South Africa today is in an era of chronic unemployment rate with current unemployment standing at 30.8% and the unemployment rate by population group stands as follows: African 33.8%; Coloured 24%; Indian/Asian 13% and White 8.1% in the first quarter of 2020. According to these figures, it is clear that the unemployment rate amongst the African population is higher than other race populations in the country, with male unemployment accounting for 28.3% (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Figure 3.1 shows that 31.6% of African/Black men are unemployed being the highest, followed by 24.7% of Coloured; Indian/Asian men with 11.7%, and White men being the lowest with 8.0%. In analyzing figure 3.1 it is evident that unemployment primarily affects the vulnerable and previously marginalized populations. This indicates that South Africa is struggling to generate sufficient jobs as it remains one of the countries with the highest unemployment rate.

This suggests that unemployment in South Africa is chronic and it remains a key driver of father absence. In analyzing figure 3.1 further, it is evident that African men experience the pain of unemployment more than other men of different racial populations. It is evident that many African men are living in poverty and are unable to make ends meet and fulfill their cultural provider role. Osella and Osella (2000) assert that men in this state often resort to criminal activities to provide for their families. A

study conducted by Glikman (2004) discovered that African American fathers from low-income classes in the USA experience a sense of failure when they are unable to provide for families. This enormous social pressure of being a financial provider often leads them into criminal activities to fulfill the role.

Through the foundation phase teacher education program in the Eastern Cape Province, Salami and Okeke (2018) investigated absent fathers' economic status and perception of fatherhood concerning the developmental challenges faced by children in South Africa. Ex post facto design and the sample of 300 participants: 43% males, 57% females with 78% black teachers, 13% white, 7% mixed race, and 2% Indian were used. According to the findings, financial factors and the father's race influence the father's participation in the child's educational development. Black fathers in South Africa had the highest absenteeism and the lowest levels of participation when compared to fathers of other races. According to Edwards, Borsten, Nene & Kunene (2001) note in western nuclear families fathers prioritize their fatherhood role of being educators, and emotional supporters more than financial providers.

Xanthos, Treadwell, and Holder (2010) linked unemployment with a high mortality rate among men, which also contributes to the high rate of father absence. Subsequently, the authors' study discovered that unemployed African-American men were exposed to diseases and poor health care. Furthermore, the study illustrated that these men had the lowest life expectancy and high mortality rate than men and women of all other race groups in America. The financial role that is associated with fatherhood in black societies in South Africa leads to men acting strong and not seeking medical attention when needed, taking risks, drug substances, and behaving violently when they are unable to provide. Thus, this contributes to low life expectancy and high mortality among men (Khunou, 2014). It could be assumed that unemployment among fathers can lead to poor health and psychological well-being—both of which can lead to high mortality.

According to Selebano (2014), unemployment has the potential to cause men to experience psychological difficulties, depression, other health-related issues, and the ultimate mortality due to their inability to provide for their children and families. However, the link between unemployment and mortality in the context of father absence has not been explored in South Africa.

### 3.3.2 Cultural factors

Culture plays an important role in defining fatherhood roles and shaping family structures. A study in Ghana reveals that in Ghanaian societies a father's primary responsibility is that of economic provision to his family. Although it is the man's responsibility to secure financial security for the family, the increased level of unemployment becomes a barrier. This economic challenge results in children being born out of wedlock as many fathers are unable to marry and fulfill the fatherhood role, hence, fatherhood absence dominates in Ghana (Otu, 2015).

The increased high rate of unemployment among young black men (fathers) limits their ability to financially provide for their families and children (Mkhize, 2006). The Zulu societies follow customary law which suggests that the father's rights to his biological children are linked to *Inhlawulo* or *Lobola*. *Lobola* is a practice in which the groom's family is expected to pay the bride price before marriage, whereas *inhlawulo* is paid when the child's father does not intend to marry the child's mother but wishes to, however, acknowledge his paternity and build a relationship with his child. The practice of *Lobola* is whereby the groom's family is expected to pay the bride price before marriage while *Inhlawulo* is paid when the father of the child does not have intentions of marrying the child's mother however wishes to acknowledge his paternity and builds a relationship with his child (Swartz & Bhana, 2009).

Furthermore, if there is a *Lobola* or *Inhlawulo* negotiation among families, the child belongs to the paternal family, otherwise, the child belongs to the maternal family. Therefore, the father does not have an absolute right to his child, he only will acquire parental rights by paying 'damages' (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). The term 'damages' is a colloquial term that refers to pregnancy out of wedlock, and therefore the father of the child will have to pay damages to acknowledge the pregnancy, take responsibility for fatherhood to the woman's family to be part of the child's life regardless of the relationship with the mother (Nkani, 2017). This practice is also prevalent in other South African Black cultures, although there is a limited body of knowledge about what this practice means for men who are unable to pay to legitimize their fatherhood (Mncayi, 2016).



In expansion, Posel (2003) notes that many fathers fail to pay *Lobola* as it is now commercialized (synonymous with men buying women). This means that *Lobola* is no longer payable in a form of livestock. Many fathers cannot afford to get married or pay damages because they fail to secure employment. By failing to pay damages or *Lobola*, fathers find themselves not being acknowledged as the child's lawful father and may be restricted from visiting or building a relationship with the child (Van den Berg & Makusha, 2018). One barrier among others of high unemployment led to the low rate of marriage, female-headed households, and absent fatherhood in black societies.

Makusha and Richter (2016) investigated gatekeeping and its effects on father involvement among black South Africans in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The main goal of their study was to investigate the influence of maternal and cultural gatekeeping on father involvement. Data were collected through qualitative in-depth interviews. According to the findings of this study, cultural gatekeeping plays a role in determining the father's involvement in the child's life in the Zulu context. The practice of *Lobola* and *Inhlawulo* prevents poor fathers from residing with their children and the mother's child. As a result, many fathers stay away from their families because they cannot meet the *Lobola* or *Inhlawulo* requirements.

Thus, the majority of children live without their fathers in their maternal kin households headed by females. The work of Makusha and Richter (2016) relates to this as they both focus on the father's absence and involvement in the child's life. However, the current study expands on Makusha and Richter (2016) by analyzing the media discourse on female-headed households concerning absent fatherhood in the post-colonial era. The problem of father absence in South Africa has been on the rise since 1994. Thus, it could be assumed that South Africa is experiencing an intergenerational father absence transmission.

### **3.4 Intergenerational father absence in South Africa**

According to research, the equality and nature of parenting are intergenerationally transmitted from one generation to the next in the sense that the father's fathering behaviour in one generation may be linked to the son's fathering behaviour in the next generation (Serbin & Karp, 2003). Guzzo (2011) argues that a man's understanding of fatherhood is highly influenced by his own experience with his father. However, D'Onofrio, Turkheimer, Emery, Harden, Sluske, Heath, Madden, and Martin (2007) suggest that father absence may also be a result of environmental transmission in the case whereby there is a high level of father absence in the society.

Pouget, Serbin, Stack, Ledingham, and Schwartzman (2012) discovered that men who grew up with absent fathers were more likely to become absent fathers themselves in a study of 386 men from socioeconomically disadvantaged North American families. These temperamental characteristics of a father's absence might be transmitted from their fathers (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). Similarly, Brown, Kogan, and Kim (2018) researched the intergenerational transmission of fathering among young African-American men and boys in rural communities in the United States. Their study revealed that the father-son relationship contributed to the next generation's fathering pattern in that, a father's involvement in the development of the child encourages a cycle of father involvement in the next generation, and that an absent father encourages a cycle of intergenerational father absence.

Similar to the study of Brown et al. (2018), Furstenberg and Weiss (2000) examined whether fatherhood patterns are passed down through generations. A sample of 110 males in Baltimore in the USA and 30 years of longitudinal study formed part of the data collection. The study identified a positive link between the consistent presence of a biological father in men's histories and the fatherhood pattern. Men who grew up not living with their fathers throughout their childhood were likely to be living without their children as well.

South Africa's current state of fatherhood is heavily influenced by the country's history. Reflecting as far back to the eras of colonialism and apartheid discussed in Chapter 2, many African children grew up without their fathers as they were separated by the migrant labour system and the Group Area Act (Rabe, 2006). The working conditions at the mines limited the experience of black fatherhood as men were only allowed to

spend at least a month annually with their family back at home and some men could rather stay and send money home (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Thus, fathers were absent throughout the lives of their children and that may have left an intergenerational cycle of father absence in South Africa. In patriarchal African families where sons are taught to inherit the father's fatherhood pattern and leadership skills, intergenerational transmission of the father role is passed from one generation to another (Lesejane, 2006). Furthermore, these traits may also result in negative generational fatherhood models.

Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, and Mphaka (2013) studied absent fathers in Johannesburg using a qualitative approach with focus group discussions as the primary data collection method. Absent fathers were sampled from four urban areas, namely: Alexandra, Thembisa, Doornkop, and Devland. The study's findings revealed that the growing number of absent fathers in South Africa is linked to historical, economic, social, and cultural contexts, and was influenced by materialist constructions of masculinity and fatherhood, socioeconomic factors such as unemployment, retrenchment, poverty, and cultural factors such as customary practices of *Lobola* and *Inhlawulo*.

The study also demonstrates the intergenerational transmission of father absence. Many respondents stated that they are absent from their children's lives because they do not know how to portray the fatherhood role after growing up in a father-absent household with no father figure. It could be assumed that the influence of the father plays a critical role in the father-absentee. As per this study, it could be asserted that father-absence in South Africa may be intergenerational among black fathers. Although this phenomenon has not been widely studied, it is an important phenomenon in understanding the country's current state of father absence. However, there is limited research done on intergenerational father absence in Africa and South Africa as many scholars focus on the impact of father absence on children.

## **SECTION B: MATRIFOCALITY AND FEMININE RESILIENCE**

Women face numerous struggles such as heading households, childcare, and financial difficulties, but they demonstrate resourcefulness which leads to resilience and positive adoption. This section presents discussions on female-headed households, matrifocal families, and feminine resilience.

### **3.5 Matrifocality**

Matrifocality is commonly associated with female mono-parenting and is characterized by “a breakdown in the conjugal relationship, the physical removal of the father, and his near-complete discontinuation from parental relationships and responsibilities” (Sacramento, Silva & Goncalves, 2014:157). Furthermore, Sacramento, Silva & Goncalves, 2014:157 assert that “Matrifocality should not be regarded as a normative trait of kinship systems; instead, it should be regarded as the result of a specific conjuncture and, as such, can take on a variety of forms.” Thus, Ypeij (2009) describes matrifocality as solo mothers, lone mothers, and sole mothers. These terms have become interchangeable in referring to women who raise children without the support of a male partner. Also, a single mother is defined as “...a woman who lives alone with at least one dependent child and does not have a partner” (Gordeev 2005: 105) hence the term ‘matrifocality’.

As a result of the increasing volatility of marital bonds and conjugal relationships, combined with the same hegemonic gender arrangements that grant male privileges and women's "natural" commitment to their families, global societies are experiencing a crisis of matrifocality, which seeks to comprehend the occurrence and maintenance of matrifocality (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2004). The family institution is undergoing a drastic change from two-parent families to one-parent families (matrifocal families). In America, approximately 50.4% of households are headed by single mothers (United States Census Bureau, 2017). In Botswana, 55% of households are headed by single mothers (Lesetedi, 2018). Matrifocality is not a new phenomenon in South Africa, however, it is a result of the colonialism and apartheid legacy that left thousands of children living in fatherless households the number of matrifocal families is still relevant to date. A survey by Statistics South Africa revealed that 43.1 percent of South African children live with their mothers with absent fathers (Statistics SA, GHS, 2018). In South

Africa, this has the potential to foster a culture of female-headed households and a dominant form of household.

Kang'ethe and Mafa (2014) investigated the influence of matrifocality in Zimbabwe using a literature review methodology. Cultural deterioration, increased space for women's freedom, harsh economic conditions, modernization, globalization, western influence, and industrialization have all been identified as factors influencing matrifocality in Zimbabwe, according to the findings of this study. The influences of matrifocality in Zimbabwe are similar to those of South Africa and, as a result, different women are exposed to different experiences in their matrifocal lives.

Mkhize and Msomi (2016) conducted a study that investigated work and career experiences in South Africa among African single mothers. A qualitative research design was used, and non-probability, purposive sampling was used to collect data. According to the findings of the study, many women see work and having a career as a way to earn a living and live independent lives. However, they face challenges in balancing their work and family lives, which are sometimes exacerbated by the absence of fathers in the lives of single mothers and their children. Furthermore, the study found that the lack of marriages and the decline of traditional family life in African societies also had an impact on the work and professional opportunities of both groups of women in this study.

### **3.5.1 Children living in matrifocal families**

#### *Culture and identity*

Culture and identity form part of children's development and formation of character and behaviour. Tsang, Hui, and Law (2012) proclaim that identity is structured, learned, and dynamic and that a subjective assessment of a person's identity has moral implications for that person. The role of the family in the formation of a child's identity cannot be overstated. Family is defined by the White Paper on Families in South Africa as "A societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or ties to marriage and goes beyond a particular physical residence" (Amoteng & Richter, 2007: 4). However, due to factors affecting the family, there is a high rate of single-mother families, whereby children grow in an absent-father family. Thus, children from single-mother families often go through an identity crisis in their adolescent stage as compared to children from two-parent families (Nduna, Kasese-

Hara, Ndebele & Pillay, 2011). It has been reported that children without fathers may feel 'illegitimate' as opposed to 'legitimate' children who know their biological fathers (Langa, 2010). It is presumed that for children without fathers, there may be confusion about identity and legitimacy, particularly during the adolescent stage (Nyanjaya & Masango, 2012)

A study by Makofane (2015), based on the experiences of African women from absent-father families, found that a lack of cultural rituals by the paternal family due to being raised by mothers with a father absence may lead to misfortune, behavioural problems, and cultural conflict. It is important to note that a lack of cultural belonging often leads to a dearth of a strong sense of identity and difficulties in information and maintaining relationships. Additionally, the findings of Zoleykha, Mirmahmoud, and Eskander (2017) on the comparative identity styles between single-parent and two-parent adolescents, found that children from two-parent families do not have an identity crisis as compared to those who are raised in single-parent families. The study further outlines that identity crisis often results in behavioural problems and difficulties to cope with life events among children.

A similar study conducted by Smith, Khunou, and Nathabe-Taulela (2014) explored the social identity influence of a father on black South African young women and men between the age of 21 and 35 years from a historically disadvantaged township in South Africa. The study revealed that the practicing father's culture, traditions, and taking up his surname are viewed as part of the child's cultural identity. Taking on the surname of one's father is associated with cultural identity because fathers are thought to be the creators and carriers of children's cultural identity and heritage in African societies (Nugent, 2010). Thus, many children especially boys find themselves going through an identity crisis as they do not know where they come from when using their mothers' surnames. Even though some children struggle with their identity and they believe that they will not be successful in life because they are not accepted by their fathers' families, they still turn out successful. Therefore, there is a need to outline the successful outcomes of children living in single-mother households. Langa (2010: 519), asserts that "Black boys who do not have fathers in South Africa portray themselves within constructive male identity and idealize themselves on becoming 'different' fathers compared to their fathers."

### *Successful outcomes of children living in Matrifocal households*

There is a debate about single mothers and their inability to raise successful children. Many studies focused on the negative outcomes of children raised by single mothers as such households are linked with poverty, anger issues, depression, low career achievements, anxiety, and social and financial challenges (Uchenna, 2013; McLanahan, Tach & Scheider, 2013). However, there were negative consequences because many scholars were predisposed to proceed from the standpoint of family deficit, which views single-mother families as “disrupted and broke”, yet turning a blind eye to the positive outcomes of children raised in matrifocal families (Mabelane, Makofane & Kgadima, 2019: 158).

Amato (2010) highlights that the involvement of both parents in the child's development is important for the child's upbringing outcomes. Amato's (2001) assumption is evident in Nigeria among the Yoruba where the parental roles are culturally determined and are essential for the child's upbringing. The Yoruba believe that the child's emotional or psychological and behavioural upbringing are balanced by the caring responsibility of both parents (Ekpenyong & Udisi, 2016).

Children from single-mother families are associated with failure, crime, poor academic performance, economic support, health, lower cognitive attainment, and behavioural issues (East, Jackson & O'Brien, 2007: 14; McLanahan, Tach & Scheider, 2013:340; Amato, Patterson & Beattiec, 2015: 191). There may be a danger in presuming that matrifocal households are bad for children for the reason that there is no father present to support children at all stages of their development, both financially and emotionally (Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010).

Hence, Usakli (2013) argues that when it comes to emotional adjustment, self-esteem, and academic achievement, children from single-mother families are just as successful as children from two-parent families. Kulukjian and Pagan (2015) conducted a study on the successful life outcome of children raised by single mothers. Their study used a mixed-method design for data collection and content analysis for generating findings from biographies of adults who were raised by single mothers. The findings of this study demonstrated that religious mothers frequently expressed exceptionalism and provided affirmation to their children. The study further discovered

that children raised by single mothers established another family system other than their nuclear family system to achieve strength, resilience, and successful life outcomes. The children raised by single mothers do succeed beyond all the barriers to success in life, school, and the workforce.

For instance, some successful politicians were raised in single-mother households. To mention a few, this includes the former president of the United States of America, Barack Obama—who demonstrated how his mother and grandmother made sacrifices to get him and his sister the best education that encouraged him to thrive for greatness (YouTube, 2016). Others include Dr. Muyiseni Ndlozi, a national political figure, who was raised in a single-mother household and became a public figure despite all the challenges he faced growing up. There is minimal literature to support positive outcomes of children raised in single-mother households, hence this study sought to highlight how children raised by single mothers succeed through their mother's strength and resilience despite all the challenges and stigmatization associated with single-mother households.

### **3.6 Female-Headed Households**

According to Kgatshe (2005), a female head of household is a woman who is responsible for maintaining the family as a result of divorce, separation, immigration, or relationship breakdown. It is critical to distinguish between *de jure* and *de facto* households in this study. *Jure* connotes the female-headed households that are typically led by widows or unmarried, divorced, or separated women, whereas *de facto* means female-headed households that may include men who are unable or unwilling to work (Kgatshe, 2005). As a result, this study will concentrate on *de jure* female-headed households. Female-headed households are not a post-apartheid phenomenon in South Africa but are rather a prevalent feature among South African families.

However, it is a reality rooted in the material context of this country. There was a gendered division of labour in place, with women playing an important role in the household by producing agricultural goods (food) that served as the subsistence base for their families. This was accomplished while they were also in charge of domestic labour, as well as nurturing and socializing their children. This implies that a specific type of patriarchal social relations existed and continues to exist in which women are



overworked by the different societal norms and expectations imposed on them (Rogan, 2013b). Patriarchal society and social norms that promote male dominance, influence, and power over women's subordination remain valued and prevalent in South Africa across races and ethnic groups (Seabi, 2009).

Many studies have shown that Female-headed household is a global phenomenon. For example, Panampitiya (2018) investigated Female-Headed Households (FHH) in rural Sri Lanka. Data from a hundred FHHs were collected using purposive sampling, and questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Panampitiya discovered that most women become household heads due to the death of their spouses, separation, domestic violence, and a low marriage rate. The study's main findings included a variety of potential wellbeing vulnerabilities, a lack of social and emotional support mechanisms, and the ineffectiveness of existing community empowering methods to encourage women leadership.

Lebni, Gharehghani, Soofizad, Khosravi, Ziapour, and Irandoost (2020) investigated the challenges and opportunities that female-headed households in Iran face. A qualitative approach was taken, with semi-structured interviews conducted with 26 females chosen through purposive and theoretical sampling. Female-headed households, according to the study's findings, were vulnerable groups that may be abused and subjected to violence by society and partners, and who lacked the security to live and support their families. Furthermore, the study discovered that female-headed households were confronted with social issues such as the label of being poor and incapable of leading households. Furthermore, the study discovered that while being the head of the household is associated with negative outcomes for women, it can also result in positive outcomes such as a positive self-concept and social maturity in some cases.

Female heads of households were stigmatized in the findings of Habib's (2017) study in Bangladesh. This study revealed that society did not view female heads positively. Habib (2017) elaborates that this is because cultural and social norms and belief systems have been developed for men to be heads of households, hence society reacts when women fulfill the role of family heads. According to Dungumaro (2008), female-headed households in South Africa are larger and more likely to have unemployed heads. A case study in Pietermaritzburg, Goebel, Dodson, and Hill (2010)

investigated the conditions of most female-headed households whereby two household surveys were conducted in 2006, and data were gathered from the surveys. The study found that FHH is isolated and marginalized in urban peripheries left in the rural areas facing hardships related to poverty, caregiving, illness, and lack of job opportunities. Most women in these houses depend on social grants to take care of their families and improve their standard of living.

Flato, Muttarak, and Pelsler (2016) also conducted research in South Africa on the triangular dynamics of Female-Headed Households, economic vulnerability, and climate variability. The study revealed that widows, never-married women, and women with a non-resident spouse are particularly vulnerable as they have limited access to economic development skills, social networks, and coping strategies to handle the harsh conditions and economic challenges that they face. Finally, Posel and Rogan (2011 & 2012) discovered a smaller impact of earned income on reducing poverty among female-headed households in their analysis of the growing poverty disparity between female- and male-headed households.

The majority of research on female-headed households has concentrated on cases where women are socioeconomically disadvantaged and have negative life outcomes. However, it is possible to improve the social position of female-headed households by providing quality support and encouraging the change of gender stereotypes so that their role as heads and leaders of families can be widely embraced in society. This would help in avoiding societal issues such as the stigma of being unprotected and social exclusion. The link between poverty and female headship, on the other hand, needs to be qualified (Nwosu & Ndinda, 2018). Not all female-headed households are extremely vulnerable, and the risk of poverty frequently varies by context as well as several other household characteristics.

### **3.7 Socio-economic factors of female-headed households**

#### **3.7.1 Unemployment and Poverty**

Unemployment remains a key challenge in South Africa, and the rate of unemployment has risen over the years. As mentioned above (see section 3.3), the rate of unemployment in South Africa stands at 30.1% and unemployment among women is higher than the opposite sex. Unemployment among women stood at 32.4% compared

to 28.3% of unemployed men in Quarter one of 2020 (Statistics South Africa, 2020). The Quarterly Labour Force Survey in South Africa revealed that African women are the most vulnerable as compared to women in other population groups. Figure 3.2 illustrates the rate of women's unemployment in South Africa by population group.

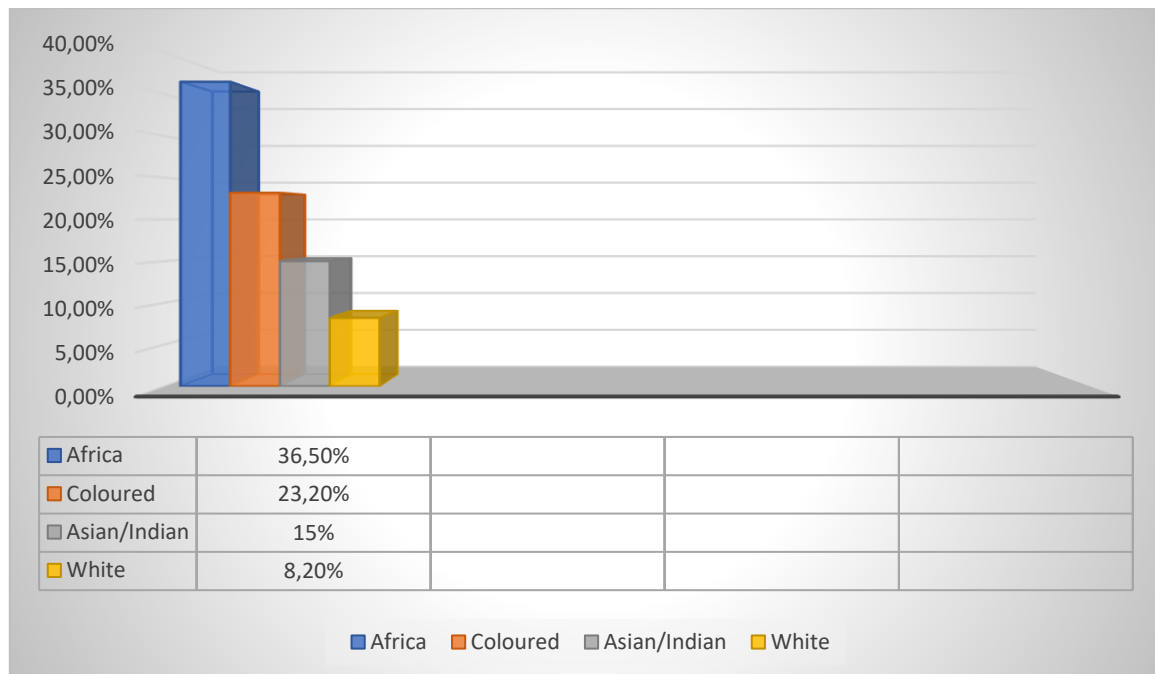


Figure 3.2: Unemployment and poverty rate by population Source: Statistics South Africa (QLFS Q1 2020)

Figure 3.2 shows that 35.5% of African women are unemployed, followed by 23.2% of unemployed Coloured women, further followed by 15% of Indian/Asian with a White population having the least unemployment rate of 8.2% (Statistic South Africa, 2020). These figures illustrate that an increased rate of unemployment among females indicates that gender and racial disparities are still predominant in the labour market hence most women find it hard to find jobs. Gender inequalities persist in labour markets as employment remains biased towards men (Chitiga, Henseler, Mabugu & Moissonare, 2020). The gendered labour market difference leads to a significant income gap between men and women. As a result, women face a higher rate of poverty particularly when they are the heads of their households.

In recent decades, the idea that women bear an unequal and growing burden of poverty on a global scale has been encapsulated in the concept of "feminization of poverty" (Chant, 2003: 2). Female-headed households are considered to be at a higher risk of poverty, particularly when there is only one 'breadwinner' adult in the

household. Various studies have shown a link between poverty and female-headed households with low socioeconomic status (Goebel, Hill & Dodson, 2010; Javed & Asif, 2011; Panampitiya, 2018).

There is mounting evidence that poverty is becoming increasingly feminized. This implies that women make up a sizable proportion of the world's poor (Frye, 2007; Heintz & Jardine, 2008). Dlamini (2006) used data from the 2002 general household survey in his study on the measurement and characteristics of single mothers in South Africa. Single mothers are more common in African/black and coloured populations, and they are on average younger than 25 years old, according to the findings of this study. Teenage pregnancy, poverty, and unemployment have all been perceived as reasons for the high prevalence of single mothers.

Furthermore, the study discovered that de jure single mothers are poorer than married mothers across the board for the vast majority of indicators. However, there is a subset of married mothers whose fathers are absent (de facto single mothers) who have worse statistics than married mothers. It is important to note that the relatively high proportion of single mothers has important implications for women's poverty levels in South Africa, as well as the impact this may have on their children. Despite the level of poverty that single mothers find themselves in, some try to escape from poverty life by starting some activities that will generate income for them.

### **3.7.2 Gender-Based Violence**

The high rate of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in South Africa may have a contributing impact on the trend of female-headed households. Many women head households because they are victims of Gender-Based Violence and they do not find it to be an intergeneration trend to stand up for themselves.

Gender-Based Violence is a very strong experienced and widespread problem globally that mostly affects women and girls. Although men and boys are also victims of GBV, females are more vulnerable to GBV victimization than males (Matthew, 2010). GBV is defined in many ways by scholars and organizations. It can be broadly defined as “The general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, as well as the unequal power relationship between genders within the context of a specific society” (Bloom, 2008:

10). Gender-Based Violence occur in different forms and all of them are gendered as a result of how gender power inequalities are entrenched in societies (Moolman, 2016). Most women go through either domestic, physical, emotional, economic, sexual violence, or femicide.

Although there are difficulties in obtaining accurate GBV statistics, South African studies had shown that sexual and physical violence are the most common types of violence women experience the most (Seedat, Van Kiekerk, Suffla & Ratele, 2009). In addition, Statistics South Africa (2017) revealed that one in five women in South Africa has experienced physical violence. Using the South African Police Services reports, most cases reported were rape and sexual offenses. According to Sultana (2010), patriarchal power that dominates in societies places men's leadership as a norm with men holding the majority power over women and the society. This patriarchal system paints a vivid picture of men being viewed as superior to women, whereby women should be submissive and always thrive to meet men's needs without the willpower to protect their bodies while men perpetrate violence against women with impunity.

### **3.7.2.1 Causes of Gender-Based Violence**

Gender-Based Violence in South Africa is influenced by numerous factors. The historical roots of Gender-Based Violence can be linked with the colonial and apartheid periods where the harsh working conditions in the mining environment led black men to use violence and aggression as a legitimate way of expressing themselves, resolving conflict, and asserting their masculinity (Ratele, 2008).

#### *Cultural influence*

The patriarchal cultural practice and gendered power inequality are the key drivers of Gender-Based Violence in South African societies (Jewkes, 2002). The social and cultural construction of male superiority over women manifested in men feeling entitled to a woman's body, pushing perceived transgression of gender roles, and viewing women as having low social value. Similar to the patriarchal practice, cultural practices such as *Lobola* influence the violence against women by their husbands (Cornelius, Shahiokh & Mills, 2015). Although, *Lobola* serves the cultural purpose of joining two families together some men take it as a mechanism to have control over their wives and treat them as property they bought (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005).

A study conducted in Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, and Limpopo discovered that *Lobola* payment makes men to be entitled to their wives and that is normal for husbands to physically punish their wives if they refuse to be submissive (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005). In the African proverb, it is said that “*Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi*” which implies that a woman’s grave is at the home of her husband’. This traditional proverb is used as a communication tool during premarital counseling to encourage women to value marriage and stay with their husbands until they die despite the physical or psychological blows (Phiri, Mulaudzi & Heyns, 2015). According to Hussein (2005: 72), this proverb “...perpetuates gender inequality and associates males with supremacy and firmness and females with powerlessness and indignity.” These patriarchal practices often privilege men over women and lead women to normalize Gender-Based Violence.

#### *Environmental influence*

Heise, Ellsbery, and Gottmoeller (2002) highlight that being exposed to a violent environment can result in the display of violent behaviour or acts in one’s adult life. Furthermore, the two authors note that GBV is intergenerational among boys who grew up in violent homes leading to individuals normalizing violence and using it as a way of communication. Boys who grew up seeing their fathers displaying acts of violence may adopt the violent lifestyle and perpetuate violence against their wives (Heise, Ellsbery & Gottmoeller, 2002). Furthermore, the authors assert that children’s socialization is shaped by the modeling behaviour of their parents. For example, boys will model the ideas of their fathers whereas girls model their mother’s behaviour. According to Wood and Jewke (2001), boys who grow up in a father-absent home with no positive role model may also perpetuate GBV to prove their masculine role. Father absence negatively affects boys and they tend to be aggressive, abusive, and violent in their adulthood.

#### *Economic influence*

Lack of economic independence, unemployment, and poverty among women are the key drivers of Gender-Based Violence (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005; Gass, Stein, Williams & Sedaat, 2010). The status of unemployment among women indicates that it is difficult for women to secure employment more than men. It was revealed by Statistics South Africa (2020) that 32.4 % of women in South Africa are unemployed.

Furthermore, a survey conducted by Mokgatle and Dauda (2014) revealed that 60% of women were unemployed and experienced emotional and physical violence. Jewkes (2002) highlights that poverty and unemployment among women make it hard for women to leave violent relationships as they are economically dependent on their partners. Although the above studies confirm that unemployed women experience some form of violence, Kiss, Schralber, Heise, Zimmerman, Gouvela, and Watts (2012) confirmed that educated and economically independent women are less likely to experience any form of violence. For some men, being dependent on women shows a loss of authority.

Salter (2016) notes that in some cases men believe that women should be punished for chastening them, hence the need for power, control, and dominance in the relationship. Studies indicate that unemployed men become frustrated and angry because they cannot fulfill the role of being financial providers—which often leads to acts of violence against their partners (Sigsworth, 2009; Dolan, 2001). In this context, GBV becomes a prominent mechanism through which men reinforce power, and authority and maintain the cultural patriarchal power (Abrahams, Jewkes, Martin, Matthews, Vetten & Lombart, 2009). GBV could be another factor that contributes to the increasing number of female-headed households in South Africa because women had enough of being violated by the men who by nature are supposed to be protecting them. Thus, women are scared to live under the same roof with violent men, while some women head their families because their husbands have been imprisoned.

### **3.8 Gender Inequality and Female-headed Households**

Holmes and Jones (2012; 13) define gender as “A socially constructed concept referring to women’s and men’s different roles and responsibilities determined by social, economic, political and cultural factors.” Different societies and cultures interpret these roles differently. However, in many contexts, they translate into resource inequity, responsibilities, and constraints, particularly for women. South Africa remains the most unequal country in the world in terms of gender, power, social control, income and wealth disparities between men and women, as well as the differences in race, class, ethnicity, and culture (Keeton, 2014).

Most women earn less than men in the same job or are more likely to be unemployed in South Africa (Makou, 2017). Another extent of gender inequality in South Africa is

in social reproduction where most women spend more time working than men, and much of this work is unpaid work in the domestic sphere that is uncounted for (Counting Women's Work, 2018). Women's responsibilities include caring for and facilitating other domestic tasks and these tasks are gender-based. Nevertheless, women remain unacknowledged despite their importance to the society and economy. When assigned a monetary value, unpaid care and domestic work are estimated to be worth 25% of South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

This is valuable work that is inadequately recognized by the South African government despite the personal costs it imposes on women as it reduces their ability to further their education and leaves women with less time for self-care (Khan, 2017; Razavi, 2011). Furthermore, the widespread father absence creates a double burden of childcare and a lack of financial support for women (Budlender & Lund, 2011:936). Although women carry multiple burdens, they have the strength to overcome all the burdens and build their homes and raise their children.

### **3.9 Feminine Resilience**

Considering the negative narratives and stressful economic situations that many single-mothers experiences as discussed above, many single mothers continue to work hard to confront these challenges and raise their families. Many women work hard to generate enough income and resources to raise their children despite the absence of a second income that husbands may provide. This talks about the resilience of single mothers which is often missing in public and the media narratives of single-mother households.

The definition of resilience should include two key components: (1). "The individual is confronted with a significant risk that has a significant impact on culturally aligned normative development; and (2). The individual responds well to potential risk experiences" (Masten, 2001; Schoon & Bynner, 2003: 22). Thus, resilience refers to the positive adjustment (i.e., the process of successfully adjusting) in the face of potentially devastating odds (Masten, 2001; Schoon & Bynner, 2003). Single mothers, for example, face numerous challenges such as role overload and financial difficulties but can also demonstrate resourcefulness which can result in positive adaption and therefore resilience (Cheeseman, 2010).



Resilience is influenced by one's understanding, cultural values, risk tolerance, and subjectivity, and is thus, at least in part, socially constructed (Béné, Headey, Haddad & von Grebmer, 2016).

A group of resilient-urban-impooverished African-American single mothers was studied for their parenting goals and strategies by Brodsky and De Vet (2008). Semi-structured interviews with ten mothers were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis technique. This study discovered that there are many gender stereotypes held about poor single mothers' parenting styles. These resilient mothers described a variety of fully implemented parenting strategies to address a wide range of parenting goals including protecting their children, instilling values, and disciplining inappropriate behaviour.

Zirima and Gadzikwa (2017) explored the experiences of female university students at a selected Zimbabwean university who grew up without their biological fathers for the majority of their childhood to collect data for this study. An exploratory case study design and semi-structured interviews were used and fifteen participants aged 20 to 25 years were chosen using a snowball sampling technique. As per the findings of this study, the majority of female students who grew up in fatherless homes used silence as a strategy to avoid talking about their absent fathers and have become resilient as a result of their life experiences.

Apartheid experience and legacy made women more resilient to the challenges they faced. Masten (2001: 230) defines feminine resilience as "a way for women to cope with significant challenges that threaten to disrupt culturally aligned normative development." In South Africa, women are vulnerable to Gender-Based Violence, poverty, female-headed households, and HIV infections. Despite all the challenges that single mothers face, they still have the strength and develop strategies to overcome such challenges to provide a home for their children (Mitchell, 2006). According to Cabrera, Tamis-Lemonda, Bradley, Hofferth, and Lamb (2000), a father's involvement does not only benefit children but their mothers as well. Mothers who do not receive any support from their children's fathers are likely to experience stress and it may also lead to social isolation. However, many women have raised successful children even in such harsh conditions.

Jefferies and Theron (2018) conducted a systematic review with a qualitative synthesis of the resilience of women and girls in South Africa. The results of their study demonstrate that women and girls' resilience-supporting techniques are cultivated through constructive relational contexts that provide emotional and pragmatic support as well as strength-fostering spirituality.

Similarly, Mabelane, Makofane, and Kgadima (2019) conducted a qualitative exploratory-descriptive study to obtain insights into an adult female growing up in female-headed families. As a method of data collection, the study used a purposive and snowball sampling method to sample 12 participants aged 15 to 25. Participants revealed that their mothers' resilience and persistence helped them overcome the difficulties they faced. Furthermore, they revealed that their mothers lived according to the African proverb that says "*Mosadi o swara thipa ka mogaleng*" which means a mother holds the sharpest part (blade) of a knife. This implies that mothers will do everything within their powers to provide for their children (Mabelane, Makofane & Kgadima, 2019).

Many Black people, particularly women, are still affected by the legacy of South Africa's apartheid past which oppressed both the Black race and the female gender. The migrant labour system forced all men to leave their families in the rural areas to work in the urban areas, thus leaving household responsibilities to women with little resources, impossible employment opportunities, and high levels of poverty (Seepamore, 2016). With the pressure to provide for their children, women also migrated to the city to work as domestic workers and thus leaving their children behind with relatives such as aunts, uncles, and grandparents (Mtshali, 2015, 2016). Grandparents, particularly grandmothers, were and still are important figures in family life. They are the primary providers of childcare and they wield the responsibility of caring for their grandchildren because of the ongoing changes and issues in families and society (Hayslip & Smith, 2013). Zauszniewski, Musil, and Au (2013) assert that grandmothers successfully raised their grandchildren because of their abilities such as strengths, resilience, and resourcefulness to adopt the role of parenting.

Sidloyi (2016) investigated the lives of elderly women who head households in Mthatha's Ngangelizwe Township. According to Sidloyi (2016), these elderly women can form bonds that enable them to transcend their social and economic constraints

through shared experiences. Furthermore, this study indicates that respondents can sustain themselves, their families, and their dependents by utilizing their government social and social capital as a revenue stream. Thus, the study indicates how resilient the extended family structure is and how such families have learned to adapt to the unusual and sometimes constraining migratory township circumstances in which people rent rather than own houses.

Raniga and Ngcobo (2014) used in-depth interviews to investigate the economic experiences of 25 single mothers who embarked on individual livelihood activities. The study found that women in low-income communities frequently start their businesses to support themselves and their families to supplement the meager income provided by the state child social grant. This indicates that women who are CSG recipients do not only rely on welfare but also make other means to supplement their income to improve their lives as well as those of their children.

A study by Zulu (2018) investigated the resilience of black women without fathers. A combination of snowballing and purposive sampling was used to obtain five female participants to participate in interviews during data collection. According to the study, Black females who grew up in fatherless homes were taught by their mothers to be highly competent, to have critical consciousness, and to become self-reliant. Mothers are good teachers of resilience because they always demonstrate the ability to accept life's hardships and view these hardships as learning experiences. In the study of Zulu (2018), mothers are shown to play a central role in teaching fatherless children resilience. Single mothers do this by inspiring children to adjust well and pay attention to positive purists and be resilient to victimization that they attributed to their father's absence. Despite the stigma associated with single mothers and all the challenges that they encounter in raising their children, mothers always thrive to find resilience, independence, and empowerment.

### **3.10 The New Family Households**

The family structure has been going through changes in the past decades. Even in strictly patriarchal societies around the world, traditional family structures are changing. These changes in family patterns have been attributed to several social, cultural, and technological transformations, as well as an increase in individual choice and freedom (Adeagbo, 2016).

With the legalization of same-sex marriage and adoption in South Africa, as well as increasing availability and acceptance of Vitro fertilization, the presence of lesbian/gay-parented families in this developing country has increased and re-shaped the family household as it evolved from the extended household, nuclear household, single household to a same-sex household (Lubbe, 2007a).

### 3.10.1 Lesbian and Gay Households

Many Lesbian and Gay families are formed through adoption which contributes to the increasing number of same-sex families. However, in some lesbian families, couples come in with their children from their previous relationships (Gates, 2013). These households are different from heterosexual and single households as they are not represented in a book or taught in class. Hence, children raised in such households experience bullying and teasing because of their family structure (Farr, Crain, Oakley, Cashen & Garber, 2016a). Same-sex parents are responsible for socializing their children to help children understand how this potentially stigmatizing identity may affect them as society is not yet accepted the same-sex family structure where children are raised by homosexual parents rather than heterosexual parents or single mothers or fathers (Goldberg, Gartrell & Gates, 2014). Thus, Goldberg, Gartrell, and Gates (2014) found that like single mothers, homosexual parents had to display resilience characteristics in overcoming the stigma imposed by society and ensure that they cultivate a positive family identity and provide resilient strategies for their children to cope with the negative narrative associated with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA) community and family structures (Patterson, 2016).

Farr (2017) investigated parenting factors and their impacts on child adjustment in the United States. Farr (2017) discovered that the children's well-being is linked to family processes such as parenting approaches not to the parent's sexual orientation. Adoptive parents demonstrate high levels of effectiveness and competence as well as a healthy psychological adjustment in their roles as parents when compared to their cisgender heterosexual parent counterparts (Goldberg & Smith, 2014). Contrary to Goldberg and Smith (2014) and Farr (2017), Vazquez (2020) studied the experiences of stigma, mental health, perceived parenting competence, and parent-child relationships of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parents in the United States.

The findings of this study revealed that except for lesbian mothers, heterosexual mothers, and gay fathers, no significant differences in parenting competence emerged as a function of parental sexual orientation or gender.

Family is regarded as the foundation of society in South Africa, and this has traditionally been attributed to opposite-sex couples (Amoateng & Heaton, 2012). However, same-sex family is viewed as a threat to children's development because homosexuality is perceived as a subculture distinct from the heterosexual mainstream society (Halberstam, 2005; Adeagbo, 2018). Breshears and Lubbe-De Beer (2016) explored the experience of lesbian and gay parented families in South African schools. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 21 parents and 12 children in lesbian and gay families. The study demonstrates that stigmatizing school experiences have a negative impact on the psychological health of children with lesbian or gay parents. Furthermore, the study found that unsupportive school climates may have an indirect impact on children's academic success by discouraging active participation from parents. This represents a paradigm shift from the general perception of a family as a monolithic entity to the recognition of family pluralism.

## **SECTION C: MEDIA DISCOURSE OF SINGLE MOTHERS AND FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**

### **3.11 Media Discourse of Single Mothers**

The way media present and represent an issue or people contribute to how people's opinions are shaped and as well as to how people respond to the presented issue, event or individuals. This section discusses the media narrative of single mothers and how the media frame ways in which people should think about single mothers and female-headed households.

#### **3.11.1 Media narrative of single mothers**

The increasing prevalence of single mothers has been given huge attention in media in the past decades as a result of a widespread father absence. Recently, the media portray single motherhood as without spousal support, irresponsible, and raising children in an unsafe environment (Bergnehr & Henriksson, 2021). The narrative of single motherhood in the media is rooted around unsustainability, dependency culture, social security, irrational motivation, and often the object of negative viewpoint. For many years, social scientists and the media have been concerned about single motherhood due to research indicating that children who grow up without their father's involvement are prone to the risk of various developmental barriers that affect life progress and behaviour (Moffitt, Caspi & Taylor, 2003)

Ridgway (2014) used critical discourse analysis to explore how single mothers are constructed in contemporary UK news media. A qualitative research design was employed using critical discourse analysis on two popular newspaper websites, one tabloid characterize, and one broadsheet. One of the main findings of this study is that a social hierarchy is indeed perpetuated in mainstream newspapers and depends on the style choice of the respective news source. These constructions and agendas are either explicit or decidedly underlying (Ridgway, 2014). The study also found that the media often portray single mothers as a homogenous group by selecting atypical families for interviews to shock on welfare dependency, familial breakdown, idealistic nuclear family, and mothers' justification for circumstances.

Contrary to Ridgway (2014), Huda (2001) previously discovered that the dominant social discourse constructs single mothers in the United Kingdom as underclass welfare claimants—some of whom live and raise their children in poverty and thus constitute a homogeneous group inferior to middle-class nuclear families. Additionally, Fessler (2017) asserts that in the media, single mothers are almost always portrayed as poor struggling women on welfare with misbehaving children who are at high risk of a variety of negative traits.

According to McRobbie (2006), the discourse of the 'yummy mummy' figure in multiple media places pressures on young mothers in the UK to live up to standards set by celebrities who are attractive, financially secure, and have successful careers—leading to feelings of inadequacy and denigration in mothers. Hallstein (2011) notes that media celebrate what is referred to as 'yummy mummy', which recognizes mothers who are disciplined in their physical exercise and diet while also seeming to have a lot of calm and perfection when it comes to mothering their children.

Parker (2017) conducted a study on the portrayal of mothers in top-grossing live-action family films and analyzed the media content of 34 mother characters in 23 top-grossing live-action family films. According to Parker (2017), top-grossing live-action family films highlighted and glamorized traditional views of mothering, and mother protagonists subscribed to modern demands of intensive mothering and further adhered to 'yummy mummy' standards. Furthermore, the study revealed that popular family films contain socially defined belief systems of motherhood that romanticize both traditional and contemporary ideas of 'good mothers' who are dependent on men. As seen from the literature, there is limited focus on the positive narrative of single mothers. There is also limited study on the media narrative of single mothers in South Africa, as such this study intends to address these gaps in the South African context.

### **3.11.2 Media Narrative of Single Mothers: Child Support Grant in South Africa**

The Cash Transfer Programme (CTPs) had been used as a policy instrument to address child poverty across developing countries over the last twenty years (Hulme, Henlon & Barrientes, 2014). The CPTs are aimed at children due to a realization that children and parents face vulnerabilities that incapacitate them to meet their needs independently due to the widespread poverty that constraints their ability to meet their individual needs (Patel, Knijn, Gorman-Smith, Hochfeld, Garthe, Chiba, Moodley &

Kgaphola, 2017). The CTPs strive to fill the gap of poverty by providing small payments to caregivers of children (Patel, 2015). The Child Support Grant (CSG) in South Africa is a noticeable example praised internationally for its demonstrated impact in assisting caregivers to improve the developmental outcomes of their children in the field of health, education, and nutrition (Department of Social Development (DSD), South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) & The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2011).

In South Africa, the Child Support Grant (CSG) was introduced in 1998 by the democratic government in recognition of the fact that apartheid has left a devastating legacy of child poverty (SASSA, 2017). The CSG is the successor of the State Maintenance Grant which was initially designed for Whites and extended to other racial groups, although most beneficiaries were Whites and Coloureds. As for Africans who lived in the rural former homelands, the grant was poorly implemented. The implementation of the CSG in 1998 covered children below the age of seven and later raised to eighteen years in 2012 (Du Toit & Lues, 2014). The value of the CSG was initially limited to R100.00 per month, which has increased over the years and currently stands at R440.00 (Hall, 2020).

The CSG's goal was to target impoverished children and alleviate child poverty regardless of family structure, tradition, or race. Although the CSG aims to improve children's social lives, it also has negative social consequences for recipients—the majority of whom are women (Devereux, 2011). A common criticism in South Africa is that CSG encourages dependence on the government, which leads to a variety of social ills such as erosion of work ethics, promotion of laziness, and perverse incentives such as increased fertility rates, even though there is a substantial body of literature both globally and in South Africa refuting these claims (Surender, Noble, Wright & Ntshongwana, 2010; Satumba, Bayat & Mohamed, 2017).

The increasing prevalence of single mothers has been given huge attention in media in the past decades as a result of a widespread father absence. Bergnehr and Henriksson (2021) explored the representation of single mothers in Sweden's newspapers and the results of the study revealed that the newspaper representation does not reflect social realities. Furthermore, there is a recurring comparison of low



socioeconomic status. In need of social welfare support, the study also revealed that the representation of single motherhood in Sweden is scarce.

A Similar study was conducted by Coe (2011) on the subjectivity of single motherhood in the Australian media and the study found that single mothers are painted as lazy human beings who prefer to stay at home rather than get paid work. The concept of single motherhood in the media is rooted around unsustainability, dependency culture, social security, irrational motivation, and often the object of negative viewpoint.

There has been an ongoing debate in South Africa about the relationship between the high rate of pregnancy and access to the CSG since its introduction. Makiwane (2010) examined data on teenage fertility and patterns of uptake of the Child Support Grant in South Africa from 1998 to 2005 in a study on the Child Support Grant and teenage childbearing in South Africa. Contrary to popular belief, the findings of this study did not indicate a significant positive relationship between the grant and the trend in adolescent childbearing in South Africa over the last two decades. Furthermore, Naong (2011) observed that there are other factors that contribute to pregnancy, such as substance abuse and poverty. However, there is no evidence to support the claim that the fertility rate and CSG access are related. Consequently, Patel, Hochfeld, Moodley, and Mutwali (2012) state that the pregnancy rate has been declining even in the presence of CSG. This indicates that CSG does not affect the county's fertility rate.

Contrary to the view that CSG recipients are passive contributors to the labour market, the findings of Patel et al. (2012) show that many recipients are actively engaged in other activities to multiply streams of income. Thus far, research has shown no links between the CSG and erosion of work ethics and low participation in the labour market (Surender, Noble, Wright & Ntshongwana, 2010). Furthermore, a study on female labour force participation and South Africans' child support grant by Eyal and Woolard (2011) suggests that receiving the CSG is associated with increased female participation in the labour market. This indicated that women do not only depend on CSG to make a living but they also participate in the labour market for monthly income.

The notion that is used to support the argument that CSG creates a dependency on government tends to turn a blindside to the structural and social factors that are relevant (from a gender perspective) that serve as barriers to women's employment. These include a lack of absorption of women with lower levels of skills in the labour

market, widespread unemployment, huge domestic and care responsibilities with limited external support, and inadequate child services (Patel, 2012).

However, research has shown the significant value that the CSG has for poor households in improving nutrition, security, and positive educational effects (DSD, SASSA & UNICEF, 2011 & 2012). Zembe-Mkhabile, Surender, Sanders, Jackson, and Doherty (2015) conducted a study on the experience of cash transfers in alleviating childhood poverty in South Africa focusing on mothers' experiences of the CSG. The study conducted forty-one in-depth interviews with CGS recipients and non-recipients. Their study revealed that the CSG plays an important role in improving the livelihood of families, especially for recipients where the grant is the only source of income.

Granlund and Hochfeld (2020) conducted a study that focused on the social and relational aspects of cash transfers in South Africa during times of livelihood change and discovered that cash transfers in South Africa have largely had positive social transformative effects on individuals. In particular, the cash transfers transformed lives in terms of dignity, autonomy, and increased decision-making powers for primary caregivers who are usually mothers or grandmothers. Positive effects were also perceived by these individuals and households even though some disputed effects and limitations were discovered (Granlund & Hochfeld, 2020).

While these studies are important in indicating the impact that CSG may have on children and households, the media provides a comprehensive overview of the beneficiaries associated with the social problems that are linked with CSG access. As demonstrated in Figure 3.3, the child support grant is regarded as Mzansi's sugar daddy because many young mothers who receive the grant money use it for their benefits like buying alcohol. Nzapheza (2019) agrees that there is a trend among young mothers to buy boxed wine when they receive the CSG money. However, Figure 3.3 indicates that the media focus on the negative narrative of CSG by only linking CSG and alcohol and not presenting the passive utilization of the CSG by the grant receivers.

Figure 3.3, below, is an example of the news media report that frames the CSG as a monetary gift from a 'sugar daddy'. Here the social government is referred to as the sugar daddy.

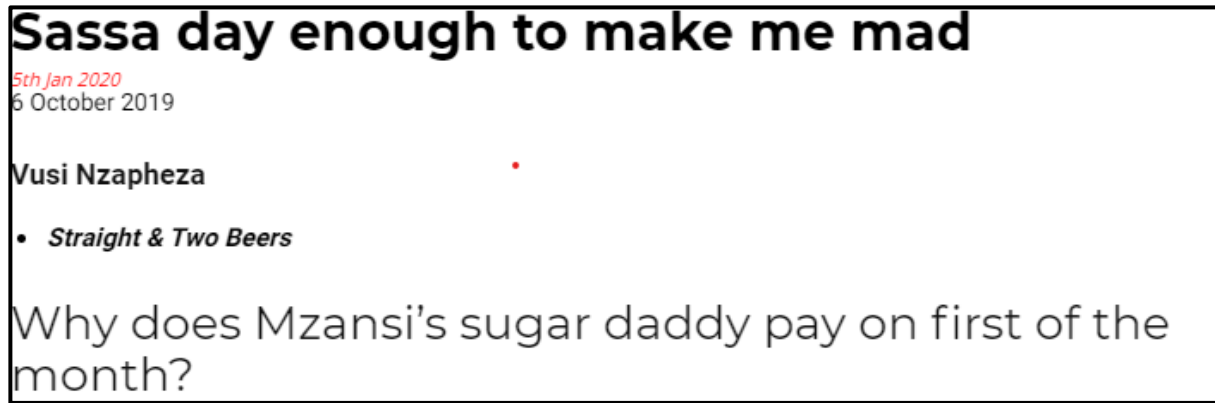


Figure 3.3: Government referred to as Mzansi's sugar daddy Source: Sunday world (2019)

Potts (2012) asserts that grant recipients use the grant money for their benefits rather than the needs of children. Surender, Ntshongwana, Noble, and Wright (2007) concur that some caregivers used the money to buy alcoholic beverages or clothing for themselves. This suggests that the grant is not always used to benefit the children.

The approach to CSG in South Africa by the media is the same attitude that is fuelled by the government representatives which leads to the stigmatization of women who receive the monthly payments as 98% of the CSG are women (Khan, 2017; Wright, Neves, Ntshongwana & Noble, 2015). The former Minister of Finance Malusi Gigaba made an unscripted comment in the budget speech and referred to CSG as '*imali yegolo*' which means 'back money'. This may be translated to imply that women lie down on their backs to become pregnant to receive the CSG (Sibanda-Moyo, 2018).

The framing of single mothers in the media can also be seen in how they are presented in soap operas. This is observable in how the producers of a local South African soap opera, *Uzalo*, construct and portray matriarchs, and how generic conventions are adhered to or subverted in comparison to other local and international soap operas matriarchs (Onuh, 2017). In the storyline from *Uzalo*, it is noticeable that single-mother households are presented as poor, looking at the character of Madongwe who is an unemployed Christian woman who stays in a one-room house with her daughter, nephew, and niece without a father. In the storyline, Madongwe's nephew dropped out of school and was involved in criminal activities to provide for his family. This storyline portrays single-mother households as exposed to poverty and children from such houses as crime perpetrators who commit crimes to better their economic situations.

In the above-mentioned storyline, the media paint a picture of what single-mother households look like and how crime is used as the only way to escape poverty.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed literature on father absence, matrifocality, female-headed households, feminine resilience, and media discourse of single mothers from an American to African perspectives. It further highlighted the current state of fatherhood in South Africa and its intergenerational transmission from one generation to another. The literature outlined challenges faced by single mothers and female-headed houses including poverty, unemployment, inequality and GBV, the negative media discourse, and their resilience in raising successful children. The next chapter will discuss the theories relevant to this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework relevant to this study and forms a basic understanding of post-coloniality, the intersectional burden of femininity, and how the media frames events, people, and issues. This chapter is divided into three sections: section one discusses postcolonialism, section two discusses the intersectional burden of femininity and section three discusses the framing theory and how it shapes people's understanding of issues and events in post-colonial South Africa.

#### 4.1 POST-COLONIAL THEORY

The first theoretical perspective for this study is post-colonialism.

##### 4.1.1 Post-coloniality

There are many perspectives for understanding post-coloniality. Jacoby (1995) notes that the term post-colonial has received criticism from scholars as they have different perspectives on the term—which often leads to a huge debate. According to Loomba (1998), post-colonialism is the objection to Western domination and imperialism. It is the methodological revision that allows critiquing Western structures of knowledge and power. For Bhabha (1990), post-colonialism is a perspective on continuity, a salutary reminder of the persistent neo-colonialism, which is the application of economic, political, cultural, or other pressures to control or influence other countries, particularly former dependencies. Therefore post-colonialism is not just a condition but a continuity.

When approaching absent masculinity and feminine resilience concepts from the South African angle as a previous British colony, the prefix 'post' has been debated fiercely in terms of two senses. One implies coming after and ideological in supplanting meaning that colonialism had passed. The other prefix implies that the inequities of colonial rule cannot be erased. Therefore, it is premature to proclaim the dismissal of colonialism. It could be argued, rather, that colonialism has not passed and people are not independent of the previously colonized African countries including South Africa (Loomba, 1998). On the role of the postcolonial intellectuals, Said (1993) expands and

clarifies experiences of colonialism and shows that colonialism continues into the present.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989: 2) state that “Colonialism is not erased but rather is a continuity of preoccupation throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression”. It is debatable as to whether the previously colonized countries are regarded as fully or properly post-colonial. Scholars such as McClintock (1995) criticize the use of the term and assert that post-colonialism cannot be regarded as a fully achieved state but could rather be viewed as a premature celebratory concept. Colonialism is not something that occurs from outside a country or people; it is something that occurs through the collaboration of forces within the country or people. However, a version of it can be replicated from within. For instance, formerly colonized countries such as South Africa are still in the same struggle for socio-economic liberation as they were under the colonial-apartheid system (Oyedemi, 2021). Thus, South Africa is still in the struggle of decolonization decades after the period of colonialization has ended.

As a result, it is arguable that post-colonialism is more than just a reaction to colonialism and should not be dismissed as such, but rather as a contestation of colonial dominance and the legacies of colonialism. Klor de Alva (1995: 245) states that “Post-coloniality should signify not so much subjectivity after the colonial experience as a subjectivity of oppositionality to imperializing discourses and practices”. The term post-colonial received criticism as scholars have different definitions attached to the term and scholars do not seem to agree on one definition (Lomba, 1998). According to Spivak (1988: 133) “Post-colonialism refers to a specific group (oppressed or dissenting) of people or individual between them rather than a location or social order, which may include those people but is not limited to them.” There are different criticisms regarding this definition, which is limited to the subjectivities of individuals. This study takes the perspective that post-coloniality has not passed and it is continuing in previously colonized countries (the post-colony). Its people are not fully independent and its existence cannot be erased or dismissed. The colonial legacies continue to shape most spheres of life in the post-colony, including the political, social, cultural, and economic spheres.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2004) note that post-colonial theory critiques and questions the outcome of colonialism on the lives, traditions, and cultures of previously colonized countries. The dominant ideology of colonialism is continuously influencing the nature of fatherhood, matrifocality, and female-headed households within Black societies and it is important in conducting this study. To understand the post-colonial experience relating to family structure in South Africa, one needs to engage colonial and apartheid culture that disrupted the African family structure and traditions by imposing harsh laws on Black people.

Many legislations were intended to separate races to benefit those of European descent while harming those of African descent (Clark & Worger, 2011). Family life was virtually impossible for African families as many went to exile, while others spent time in detention and imprisonment as a result of the struggle against apartheid.

Furthermore, the establishment of pass law and the migrant labour system played a critical role in re-shaping the family structures of African people and their standards of living. The migrant labour system targeted African men by taking them from the rural areas to hostels at mines for their cheap labour in the urban—forcing them to leave women and children behind (Matlosa, 1995). As the migrant labour system served as an economic opportunity for poor African men to pay the hut and poll taxes and provide for their families. This also left many women marginalized and destitute due to the absence of sufficient education and employment opportunities (Mabetoa, 1994). Many families were living in poverty which led to women seeking employment in nearby white areas, where they merely worked as domestic workers (Todes & Turok, 2018.)

Additionally, women were not allowed to participate in the labour market nor relocate to the urban areas to join their husbands. The pass law ensured that women and children remain disadvantaged in the poor rural areas across the country. Due to the migrant labour system conditions that only allowed men to visit home once a year, single-sex hostels and the exclusion of families resulted in many men not returning home at all and having families in the urban areas (Ramphela, 1993; Vosloo, 2020). This left women in the rural area with the economic brunt of poverty, bearing the difficulties of taking care of their families and the formation of large women headed-households and large domination of men in urban areas. The implication of these

colonial and apartheid restrictions on the current state of affairs in South Africa today cannot be ignored.

In the post-colonial era, it is still evident that fathers are still a missing link in black families. That is, the absent fatherhood phenomenon in black societies has continued to the present. Thus black South Africans experience intergenerational absent fatherhood. Although the current socio-economic realities in post-apartheid South Africa have an impact on the family as a unit and absent fatherhood, the intergenerational legacies of colonial and apartheid destruction of the black family in South Africa cannot be dismissed. In addition, single motherhood is not a new phenomenon in the post-colonial era, it is a continuous phenomenon. Mothers are still raising their children alone with the father being absent due to numerous reasons or as a result of a cultural trend among young men who grew up without father figures. Adopting postcolonial theory in this research study allows critical analysis of how colonial apartheid experiences relate to an intergeneration culture of absent fatherhood in black family structure.

#### **4.1.2 Post-colonial feminism**

Postcolonial feminist theory is concerned with double colonialism, as women simultaneously experience patriarchy and the oppression of colonialism (McClintock, 1995). Therefore, women must withstand colonial control not only as colonized subjects but also as black women (Peterson & Rutherford, 1986). Also, black women were oppressed not only by their colonizers but also by their black men through the system of patriarchy, even though they both experienced the same oppression by the colonizers. In black societies women continued to be oppressed by men, therefore, postcolonial feminism is critical. In their struggle against their colonizer black men exploited women by misrepresenting them in their nationalist discourse, while on the other hand, the colonizer is silencing their social, cultural, racial, and political differences (Peterson, 1995).

Postcolonial theory excludes the concerns of women because it is men-centered while exploiting and neglecting women. Davies (1994) criticizes the work of postcolonial theorists because they are male-centered and erase and misrepresent women's roles in the struggle for independence. For example, Said's (1977) study *of orientalism* pays little attention to female agency, and Bhabha's (1990) work on the ambivalence of



colonialism investigates the relationship between a colonizing subject and a colonized object without taking into account how gender specifics may complicate his model. Hence, Davies (1994: 201) asked, "Where are the women in the theorizing of the post-coloniality". This brought a huge debate on whether women were indeed excluded in the post-coloniality discourse or they did not contribute immensely to the field. Postcolonial feminism explores and works at the intersections of colonialism and neo-colonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in the various contexts of women's lives, subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights (Mishra, 2013).

According to Peterson (1995), women's issues were not only ignored but were also sacrificed in the name of honoring the past and African self-confidence. The postcolonial feminists point out ways in which women in former colonies continue to be stereotyped, marginalized, and trapped in a culture of oppression. However, Western feminists and African feminists are not addressing the same gender issues simply because they do not experience the same oppression. For instance, black women experience simultaneous oppression of patriarchy and race. White feminists have overlooked the racial, cultural, and historical differences that characterize these women's situations. Riyal (2019) highlights that western feminists created a "double colonization" to contrast third-world women's political immaturity with the progressive ethos of Western feminism. It is well known that third-world women are viewed as poor, uneducated domesticated, family-oriented, victimized, and this facilitates and privileges the self-representation of Western women.

Hence African feminists in post-colonial theory address the intersectional oppression of gender, race, and gender aiming to address oppressions in all systems that create inequality and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). It is possible to conclude that in post-colonial theory, Western feminism does not address black women's oppression but disadvantages them instead. Thus, it is critical to recognize the African feminist perspective on criticizing racial sexual oppression, which is not solely racial or sexual oppression, but a combination of both and experienced concurrently. Therefore, African feminism and Western feminism are not the same. Thus, feminism is not homogenous. African feminists point out that western feminists focus on the concepts such as marriage, household, and patriarchy without recognizing the history of the represented subordinate women.

The work of Carby (2001), '*White woman listen*', highlights that black women were made invisible by white feminism. Carby (2001) furthermore criticized the focus of white feminism for focusing on the narrative of feminist individuals and the ethnocentric bias, assuming that solutions advocated by white Western women to combat oppression are equally applicable to all races. While Western feminists present themselves discursively as sexually liberated, free-thinking, anti-men, and in control of their own lives. African feminists condemn western feminists for their anti-men stands, they are adamant that men should not be isolated from the struggle of women for the presence of a just society (Mikell, 1997 & Oyewumi, 2003). Additionally, African feminists highlight that western feminists lack understanding in addressing African women's problems and issues. Hence, Spivak (1988) placed a request to white women highlighting the fact that not all black women are uneducated and abused by their spouses, implying that western feminists should avoid stereotyping black women.

The experience of single motherhood is a legacy of colonialism and apartheid in black South African societies. The tax polls imposed on black men in the rural areas forced them to participate in the migrant labour system and leave their families behind to pay the tax and provide for their families. This gave birth to many female headed-houses in black societies where women bore the burden of child care, being breadwinners, and being oppressed by the system. Due to a lack of employment opportunities and empowerment, women had to leave their homes to work as domestic helpers in White families in the urban areas or on white-owned farms, where their children were prohibited from visiting. It was difficult for mothers to leave their children and nurture other children while theirs are in the rural areas under the care of relatives and grandparents. Despite the harsh working conditions, women remained resilient to provide for their children.

In this post-colonial era, women are still resilient in raising their children in absent father households and must thus be recognized for their ability to head households. Women are now independent, educated, and economically empowered and inspire their children to achieve more in life despite any challenges, but this is not to dismiss the male role in society. As a result, women still take their husbands' surname when they get married and also allow their children to take their father's surname even though they are not married. Because it is important for children to know their roots and for cultural practices such as *Lobola* negotiations where fathers play an important

role in the negotiation process. Hence postcolonial African feminism is critical in this study.

Some of the core elements of postcolonial feminism are a). it is a response to colonialism and its legacies on women, b). recognizes the experiences of women, not only as a victim of colonial oppression but as active agents in the struggle against it, c). critiques white feminist (Euro-American) universalization of narratives about rights, equality, and patriarchy that these issues are experienced differently by women from different regions outside of the West, d). challenges the ideology that has belittled the status of women, e). addressing women's issues and problems and how they are experienced differently by women from different regions outside of the West (Spivak 1988; Mikell, 1997; Carby, 2001; Oyewumi, 2003; Riyal, 2019).

Black women in the post-colonial era in South African societies should not be viewed only as victims of colonialism and apartheid but should be celebrated for empowering themselves, for solo child-bearing, and taking care of themselves in the patriarchal culture where women are meant to be invisible. Single women in South Africa are determined not to be crushed by the challenges of raising children alone, heading households, unemployment, gender-based violence, and inequality. Their strength has played a critical role in raising resilient and successful children. Nonetheless, their resilience is rarely heard nor celebrated.

## **4.2 INTERSECTIONAL BURDEN OF FEMININITY**

The intersectional burden of femininity is the second theoretical frame for this study. This frame is important in understanding the different oppression and burdens that black women go through and in the analysis of various waves of feminism.

### **4.2.1 Double Burden Theory**

The double burden feminist theory, also known as the "second shift" as coined after the work of Hochschild (1989), relates to how women work in the formal sector and also have to engage in unpaid domestic work at home. According to Hochschild (1989:3), between the amount of work performed between women and men, "*The second shift* suggests that women were more likely to share the paid work, but men were not much more likely to share the domestic work at home such as cleaning and

childcare. This combination resulted in an extra burden or second shift in which women performed the equivalent of an extra month of twenty-four-hour days”.

The ‘second shift’ started when women joined the workforce with uncooperative workplaces and unchanging gender norms, which remained the largest social movement in the United States of America. The second shift in feminism is a continuation of the first wave movement which demanded civil equality for black women in the USA and the United Kingdom (Whelehan,1995). The first shift movement in the 1960s raised questions about gender roles and they shaped public and private life. According to Tong (2009), the first wave or shift movement dealt with how the systems limited women to participate in the economy and politics, due to these limitations women were experiencing political and economic oppression. Women’s reproductive functions were limited to their home and that created a second shift of unpaid household work, childcare as well as waged work.

Whelehan (1995) notes that the second shift put forward views of women’s social and political status by the feminist, thus, is the response of the dominated left-wing politics in which women only occupied feminine tasks such as typing, clerical, or domestic support work. While radical men were comfortable with the sexual division of labour as it favoured them not realizing that it promoted oppressive power relations that pushed women outside the public sphere of work while men remained inside the mainstream of the labour force. Women began to reflect on the history of feminism and the potential for women's liberation outside of the confines of political discourse (Whelehan, 1995).

In ‘*The second sex*’, de Beauvoir (1949) stated that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. Women are different from men because of what they have been taught and socialized to do and be. Women were made to believe that they have an eternal feminine nature, according to de Beauvoir this was a way for men to control women by telling them that they are better off in their eternal feminine, keeping away from the men’s concerns such as work, power, and career. The concept of a "woman's nature" struck de Beauvoir as yet another form of oppression.

Furthermore, de Beauvoir (1949: 92) states that “There is no way to directly oblige a woman to give birth: all that can be done is to enclose her in situations where motherhood is her only option: laws or customs impose marriage on her,

anticonception measures and abortion are banned, divorce is forbidden". This means that women were forced to focus on motherhood, femininity, and being erotic objects instead of politics or anything else outside the home and family. Craig (2007a) associates the double burden of women with gender roles, stating that women and men have equal labour opportunities, however, they do not have an equally shared responsibility when it comes to domestic activities leaving women to carry all the domestic responsibilities. Due to men's lack of domestic contribution, women found themselves performing an average of two jobs (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Furthermore, Craig (2007b) asserts that mothers work double shifts and have a higher workload than fathers because they perform more work activities in a day and have more non-work activities combined with child-care and household responsibilities.

In South African societies the double shift of women was a result of the industrialization and the migrant labour law in colonial and apartheid days. As men were attracted to cities out of financial frustration to take care of their families back home, women assumed responsibility for supporting their homesteads both financially and emotionally, which was a heavy burden. Most women worked as domestic workers in white families, where they worked for long hours and they had to do domestic activities and assume childcare responsibilities at their home after long hours of work. This double burden is still visible even in the post-colonial South Africa's most matrifocal societies, women still face the burden of performing domestic activities that include child-care and having to go to work at the same time (Budlender & Lund, 2011). In some cases women find themselves doing dual work because they do not have anyone to assist them. After all, there are no male figures in most female-headed households. In South Africa day, parenting is still a women's primary role, they had to raise children, care for them, and see to the needs of the family as a breadwinner in the unstable economy.

#### 4.2.2 Intersectionality in femininity theory

In supporting the double burden theory, intersectionality as a theoretical framework relates to the third wave of feminism and how various aspects of woman's experiences and identities such as race, gender, and other social identities combined to create either an experience of discrimination or privilege.

### *Matrix of domination*

The matrix of domination is a ground-breaking theory that takes a post-colonial approach to understanding oppressive systems that intersect with gender, race, class, and other social identities (Collins, 2000). In Collins's *black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politic empowerment* she explains how oppression is rooted in dichotomous thinking, Eurocentric, and masculinist thought. Demonstrating how black women are heavily impacted by the system of race, class, and gender. According to Collins (2000), race, class, and gender oppression cannot be used interchangeably because they operate on the social structural level of institutions shaping people's lives. Gender oppression appears to be more capable of annexing the basic power of the erotic and intruding in personal relationships through family dynamics. In the United States of America for example, this may be due to racial oppression, which has fostered historically concrete communities among African Americans.

Although social class may be similarly structured to race, it may be seen as the relationship between communities and capitalist political economics and gender cross-cuts the race and class structures. hooks views the matrix of domination as political domination that believes in the notions of superiors and inferiors which are the components of all the systems of oppression. Furthermore, hooks (1981) emphasizes how these notions of dominance are constructed to shape people's lives. Race, class, and gender are oppression axes that distinguish black women's experiences within a larger, more universal matrix of dominance.

Black women have many different identities. In other words, black women identify as primary markers of their identity with their race as well as their gender. Recognizing one's race and gender is a form of identity for anyone, but what makes black women intersectional is how her gender and racial identities combine to distinguish her experience of oppression from that of other groups. In '*Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*', hooks (1981) argues that black women's experiences as victims of multiple oppressions have given them a unique perspective that must be used to shape black liberation and feminist theory. They understand the interconnectedness of racism and sexism because of their inherent intersectionality, whereas "privileged feminists have largely been unable to speak to, with, and for diverse groups of women

because they either do not fully understand the interconnectivity of sex, race, and class oppression, or they refuse to take this interconnectedness seriously” (hooks, 1981).

### *Intersectionality*

The matrix of domination is akin to intersectionality theory by Kimberle Crenshaw, which aims to unmask the cultures of oppression. In feminist theory, intersectionality has become the dominant framework for understanding the relationship between oppressive systems that construct our multiple identities and social locations in power and privilege hierarchies (Carastathis, 2014).

Kimberle Crenshaw focused on black women's experiences by dissecting court cases as evidence of how black women were oppressed through various experiences and systems. For example, in 1977, Black American women stood before the courts in St Louis Missouri to sue their employer General Motors for dual discrimination as they and other women were fired. Women faced dual discrimination because their race and gender created conditions that prevented them from being hired, whereas black men were hired in large numbers in the auto industry. Since the charges, black women struggled to get employment as the discrimination against them continued. However, the court ruled in favour of general motors and emphasized that women should not be allowed to combine statutory remedies to create a new super remedy. This simply means that only one cause of action can be examined as either sex discrimination or race discrimination but it cannot be both (DeGraffenreid, 1977).

Crenshaw (1989) investigated the experiences of black American women as the development of intersectionality as its premises the functions under the assumption that racism and sexism are components of systematic oppression. The women's identities intersect with both race and sex, living them to be affected by the intersection between racism and sexism. While white women were only experiencing sexism, black women were experiencing racism and sexism that created a unique double burden. Sexism and racism were not the only oppression that black women faced in America they were also facing other systems of oppression that were identified.

Similar to South African women who found themselves facing multiple oppression, in colonial apartheid days in South Africa, black women also experienced the oppression of class, gender, and race, while white women only experienced gender oppression (Nolde, 1991). In a society where their roles are focused on procreation and household

maintenance, black women were viewed as reproducers and consumers because of their gender. As gender women were viewed as inferior beings in society at large and at home. As a class, black women face lower levels of education and fewer job opportunities. It is not surprising, then, that domestic service was the second largest employer of black women after agriculture. As they were excluded from economic participation, with the rise of the industrial economy due to the discovery of minerals and the growth of towns black women were not considered in the mining industry not because of their race but because of their sex (Groenmeyer, 2011).

Meer (1985) also notes that black women were only allowed to work as domestic servants, or agricultural tasks at white own farms to earn an extra income, they could not enter into contracts on their own nor buy or dispose of the property. While black men migrated to the towns to work at the mines through the development of the migrant labour system and black women continued to face multiple levels of domination such as gender, class and race discrimination, inequality, and gender-based violence. When women entered the job market they were faced with inequality and sexual harassment in the workplace (Espinoza, Francis & Valodia, 2019). Not forgetting domestic violence that they faced at home by their partners because men viewed them as inferior beings. Black women continued to experience the intersection of sexism in their societies as men were patriarchal throughout the colonial and apartheid days.

In post-colonial South Africa, modern women still face the intersection of gender and social relations. Although women now have the same power, rights, and authority as men, they still face multiple intersections. Gender-based violence is still a major concern in South Africa, where women go through either domestic, physical, emotional, economic, or sexual violence (Graaff & Heinecken, 2017). As a result, women find themselves leaving the abusive relationship to leave with their children and taking the responsibility of heading the house and fighting poverty alone. Even when they are in the job market inequality still takes its toll as women are still not paid the same as men in the same work title and responsibility. It is also important to remember that women still take full responsibility in child-care and domestic activities because it is labeled as a women's responsibility because of her gender while men continue to play the patriarchal role.



Gendered patterns of care persist, with men taking little responsibility for financial or other forms of support, while women struggle to balance the need to be both caregivers and providers. Women are experiencing these intersections because of their gender traits and the patriarchal system that made them believe that they are inferior to men and are objects rather than subjects (de Beauvoir, 1949). At the core of the patriarchal system, debates are notions that perpetuate women's oppression around the world, as well as outdated practices that suggest a woman's role in the family is inferior to that of a man (Mudau & Obadire, 2017).

### **4.3 MEDIA FRAMING THEORY**

The third theoretical frame used in this study is media framing theory. The news media can set a country's agenda and focus public attention on a few major and well-documented public issues. The framing concept was developed first in the 1980s and it looked at how the media cover issues by applying certain frames. According to Entman (1993: 52), "To frame is to elect some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating context in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation". In short, how news is presented influences what audience members think about issues, people, and events (Durfee, 2006).

Pan and Kosicki (1993) traced framing from its roots in psychology and sociology. The psychological origins of framing were formed by Kahneman and Tversky (1979) who investigated how various presentations of essentially identical decision-making scenarios influence people's choices and evaluations of the various options presented to them. Goffman (1974) laid the sociological groundwork for framing, assuming that people cannot fully comprehend the world and must constantly struggle to interpret their life experiences and make sense of the world around them. According to Goffman, individuals use interpretive schemas or "primary frameworks" to classify and interpret new information to process it efficiently.

Media framing suggests how issues are presented to the audience in a way that influences people's decisions and how they process information. According to framing theory, the media creates a frame by introducing news headlines or items with predefined and limited contextualization. McQuail (1994) highlights that the media have significant effects; while they may not always be successful in telling people what

to think, they are spectacularly successful in telling people what to think about. Furthermore, Craft and Wanta (2004) point out that framing goes beyond what issues the audience thinks about to guide them on how they should think about these issues.

Thus, Fourie (2001) defines framing as the journalist's influence on the public news angle. A frame, in particular, affects the audience's perception of issues by addressing certain values and considerations that are more obviously relevant to the topic than they would be under another frame (Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997). Scheufele (2000: 309) states that "Framing is based on the assumption that subtle changes in the wording of the description of a situation might affect how the audience thinks about issues". Framing uses different types of analytical approaches in news texts as being composed of organized symbolic devices that interact with individuals' memory to construct meaning (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). It maintains a systematic procedure of gathering messages to identify a significant element that might be selectively received by the audience, and frames in news texts are likely to be independent of the interpretations of the reader of the text.

Weaver (2007) argues that the idea of framing is similar to the agenda-setting theory. The concept of agenda-setting was first introduced in 1968 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) who stated that the mass media set the agenda for the public by emphasizing certain issues as important. McCombs and Shaw put this theory to the test in the 1972 US elections, demonstrating that issues that dominated the media became public opinion. According to the findings, the news media's effects set the agenda (McCombs, 1972). The news media's role in setting the agenda includes emphasizing an issue and making decisions on stories based on the news organization's agenda.

According to McCombs (1972), the media not only sets the agenda but also shapes how the public understands and perceives a topic. The news media's agenda-setting power extends beyond the initial step of focusing public attention on a specific topic. The media also influences the next step in the communication process, as well as people's understanding and perspective on current events. Headlines made on articles regarding a certain issue paint picture in the reader's mind before reading the whole text.

When approaching the framing theory from the angle of single motherhood and female-headed households in South Africa, it is important to look at how the media present and represent these issues. Framing of issues, people, and events may be used in the South African press, especially looking at how the topics of single mothers and female-headed households in South Africa are framed in a way that the audience's views on the issues are shaped by how the media report or present them. The issue of single mothers may often be framed around poverty, negligence, and dependence on social grants, irresponsibility, and vulnerability.

The media framing of single mothers in South Africa by the media is rooted around how the Child Support Grant is presented by some government representatives, which leads to the stigmatization of women who receive the monthly payments, as 98% of the CSG recipients are women (Khan, 2017; Wright, Neves, Ntshongwana & Noble, 2015). For example, the former Minister of Finance Malusi Gigaba made an unscripted comment in the budget speech and referred to CSG as '*imali yegolo*' which means 'back money'. This may be translated to imply that women lie down on their backs to become pregnant to receive the CSG (Sibanda-Moyo, 2018).

Figure 4.1, below, is an example of a newspaper report showing how a government representative leads the stigma of women who receive CSG. Figure 4.1 shows how the media frames events, issues, and people. The media headline in this regard paints a picture of women who receive social grants influenced by how the politicians view a single mother who depends on social grant for a living. This headline may influence the public's opinion and perspective of women who receive the social grant and also create a feeling of low self-esteem among the child support grant recipients.

**'Imali yeqolo': Really, Gigaba? Women fall pregnant to get child support grants?**

Figure 4.1: News headline on Social Grants Source: Mail & Guardian (27/02/2018)

This may be viewed as a conceptual framing that may contribute to stereotyping of single women with the view that they become pregnant because they need a social grant. This put single mothers in the spotlight for being lazy and wanting the government to pay them for being pregnant. However, the achievements and resilience of single mothers are most likely to be ignored because of the framing angle

used in presenting the information. This media framing theory provides a theoretical framework for the analysis of news stories and media content about the representation of single mothers and absent fatherhood in this study.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter covered three categories of theoretical frames. Namely: post-colonial theory, the intersectional burden of femininity, and the framing theory. The post-colonial theory discussed post-coloniality and post-colonial feminism, the intersectional burden of femininity discussed the double burden, the matrix of domination, and intersectionality. Moreover, the framing theory discussed media framing and the representation of people, events, and issues. The next chapter will discuss the methodological approach relevant to this study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the methodological approach used in this study to collect and analyse data. The research methodology constitutes the internal environment of understanding and identifying the right type of research, and approaches, followed by procedures and techniques based on the research work (Goundar, 2012). The study aims to conduct a post-colonial analysis of media discourse on female-headed households in South Africa. This chapter discusses the research design, sampling of data, collection procedure, and data analysis method. Issues around quality criteria and ethical considerations in the research are also discussed in this chapter.

#### **5.2 Research Methodology**

##### **5.2.1 Research design**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Jackson, Drummond, and Carama (2007: 21) “Qualitative research is primarily concerned about understanding human beings’ experiences in a humanistic, interpretive approach”. This method is used for an in-depth understanding of phenomena and small samples are used (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Furthermore, Maruster and Gijsenberg (2013) highlight that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to interpret or make sense of a phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them, and that could be through a series of representations including interviews, photographs, recording, films, conversations, and written articles. A qualitative methodology was used in this study because it was useful for an in-depth and strong understanding of the current phenomenon of father absence and female-headed households using small and relevant samples. This study adopted an exploratory qualitative research method to gain understanding and set to explore the prevalence of a social phenomenon of post-colonial media discourse of female-headed households and motivations for the absent masculinity in post-colonial South Africa.

### 5.2.2 Sampling

To address the research objectives, data needed to be collected. The selection of data in addressing the objectives regarding the analysis of media discourses about single motherhood and absent fatherhood from a postcolonial perspective required the use of archival media data. Firstly, there was a need to locate data that capture the media discourse about absent fatherhood, which also reflects the South African colonial-apartheid influence on this phenomenon. Secondly, a data set was needed to address the media construction of single-motherhood in the post-apartheid era. According to Bless, Smith, and Sithole (2013), a researcher selects a sample based on what he or she considers to be representative elements of the whole population. Purposive and systematic sampling methods were chosen for this study.

To examine the historical example of media construction of black families, I used purposive sampling to select a documentary film titled, *Last Grave at Dimbaza*. According to Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011) “purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest”. I selected the film as it showcases the historical media construction of black families. This documentary was purposively chosen because it captures the experiences of black families under the apartheid government. From the documentary, only six scenes were purposively selected. These were scenes that related to the objectives of the study. The selected scenes were given themes according to the portrayal of black families, the migrant labour system, and the lives of black people under the apartheid system.

Furthermore, to examine the media construction of single-motherhood, I used purposive sampling to select three online newspapers, namely; *IOL*, *TimesLive*, and *News24* for stories about single-motherhood within a period of three years from January 2018 to December 2020. I selected a time frame of three years to analyze the media representation of female-headed households to capture stories about single mothers before the pandemic and during the pandemic. This was important because it was anticipated that the pandemic would surely have an impact on families and this may influence the stories written about them. Using stories from 2018 before the Covid19 pandemic allowed for access to stories that captured typical experiences of single-mother households. The three online newspapers were purposively selected

because they have the highest readership in South Africa. The South African Readership Statistics for online news publications show that *News24*, *TimesLive*, and *IOL* are the largest online news publications in South Africa. *News24* has a readership of 12.3 million, *IOL* has a readership of 7.3 million and *TimesLive* has 7 million readerships (MyBroadband, 2020). I collected 30 stories, 10 from each of the three publications that relate to absent fatherhood, feminine resilience, single motherhood, and female-headed households. Thence, I arranged the stories according to their newspaper publication and year. Thus, each story was given a number from 1 to 30. The number of articles was reduced to 18 using systematic sampling to select six stories from each publication. This was done by randomly selecting two articles per year from each group of online newspapers. Systematic sampling is a type of probability sampling method in which sample members are drawn from a larger population at random but with a fixed predetermined time.

### **5.3 Data Collection**

#### **5.3.1 Archival media materials**

This study used two forms of archival media materials to collect data.

##### *Last Grave at Dimbaza*

The first one is a documentary film, '*Last Grave at Dimbaza*', which was produced in 1974 by a group of South African exiles and British film students who formed Morena films in London to produce films about apartheid. The second documentary film was '*Last Grave at Dimbaza*'. The film was directed by Chris Curling and Pascoe Macfarlane and produced by Nana Mahamo, Antonia Caccia, and Andrew Tsehiana.

The documentary was shot in secret and smuggled out of the country where it was edited and released in England. This is because of the apartheid government's restrictive laws governing what could be filmed or photographed in South Africa. The film's goal was to expose the oppression of Black people under apartheid rule and its consequences for Black South Africans. Furthermore, the film explained the bantustans/homeland system, job reservations, and influx control through pass laws. Moreover, it compares the white people's lifestyle to that of Blacks South Africans under apartheid. It further discusses the wage gap between black and white workers

as well as how foreign investors have benefited greatly from the government's policies. It attempted to make Dimbaza an international symbol of apartheid difference and mobilized *Dimbaza* as a metaphor for the graveyard of the racially discarded through its imagery (Minkley & Pohlandt-McCormick, 2017).

The film won awards at the Grenoble International Short Film Festival, and Le Monde considered it "the most remarkable documentary shown at the 1976 Cannes Film Festival". According to Nana Mahomo, one of the producers, the film intended to show what it is like for the black people of South Africa to be on the receiving end of the white government's apartheid policy' (O'Meara, 1978). The documentary is available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHH5sA-GB20>).

Six scenes were selected for analysis in this research. The scenes captured the implementation of the policy that moved black people from the urban areas to the bantustans or homelands, the different lives of black and white people, and the experiences of black people and black family lives under apartheid, not excepting the effects of the migrant worker system on black people. The following are the scenes and titles:

1. Scene 1: Migrant labour and absent fathers: Men in shacks or hostels.
2. Scene 2: Poverty and living conditions of women in the Bantustans ("Women grow old in their twenties").
3. Scene 3: Living conditions and the experience of children in the Bantustans.
4. Scene 4: The experience of black motherhood and fatherhood.
5. Scene 5: The disruption of black family life: Separation of men from their families.
6. Scene 6: Lost generation: Freshly dug graves for children.

Figure 5.1 below displays a poster of the showing of Last Grave at Dimbaza in Chigaco two years after it was produced in London after being shot in secret in South Africa. The film won several awards including; the 2006 African Studies Association Film Festival Best Film, the 1975 FESPACO African Film Festival Best Film, the 1975 Melbourne International Film Festival George Sadoul Prize, the 1975 Paris Film



Festival International Prize, the 1975 Grenoble Film Festival Peace Prize and the 1975 Leipzig Documentary Festival (Icarus Films, 2006).

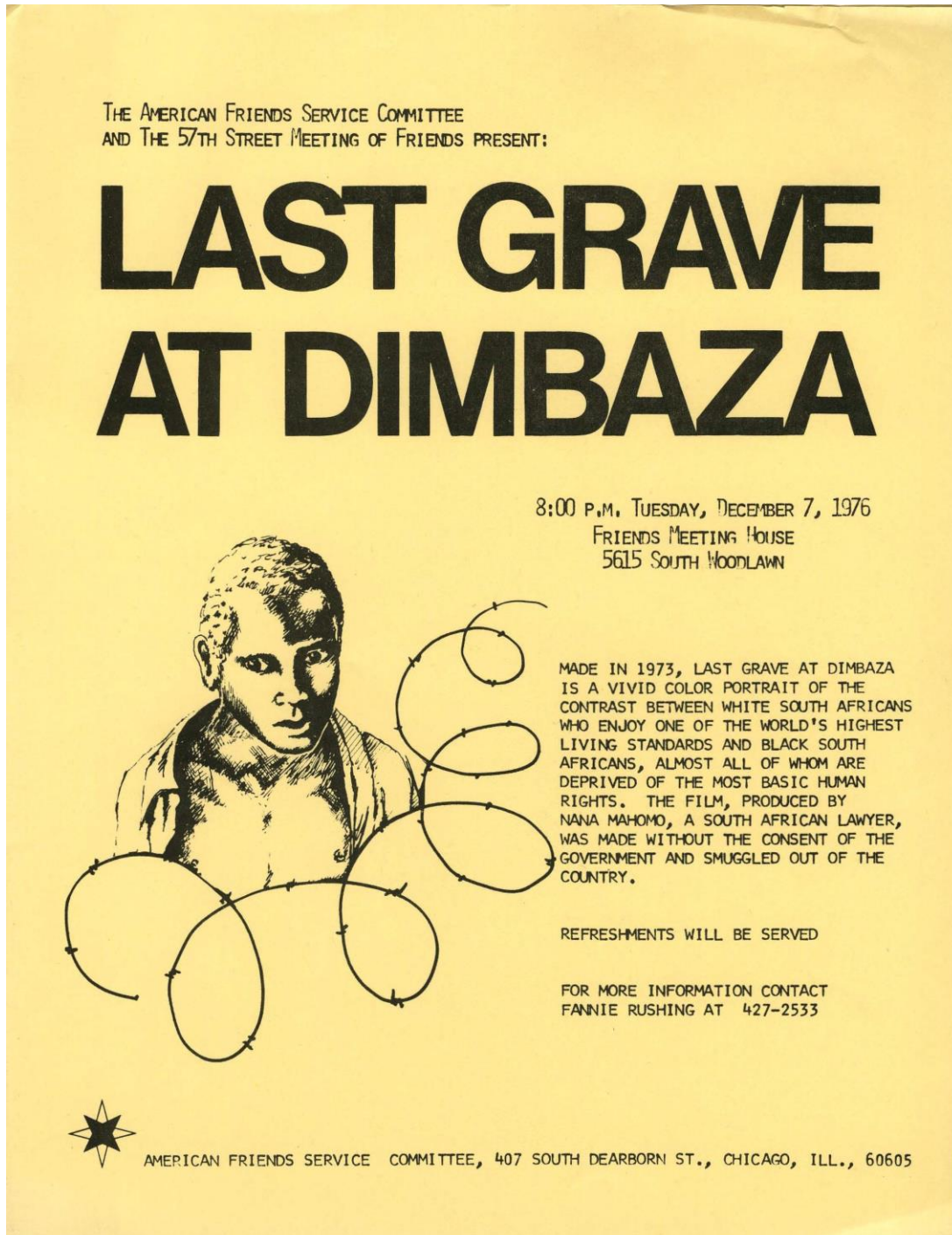


Figure 5.1: A poster advertising the showing of Last Grave at Dimbaza in Chicago, USA (Imdb.com)

### *Online Newspaper publication*

To examine the media construction of female-headed households in the post-colonial era, I collected data from three online newspaper publications namely; *News24*, *TimesLive*, and *IOL*. Before the selection of the articles that were analyzed, I searched on Google and used keywords such as, 'motherhood', 'absent fatherhood', 'poverty', 'single mothers', 'fatherhood', 'female-headed households', and 'feminine resilience' to retrieve or search for articles. The results from the search showed different articles from different online newspaper publications. Therefore, I used the uniform resource locator links that directed me to the stories from the publication's website and selected the stories according to the year of publication and their relevance to the study. I collected 30 stories from the three publications and arranged them according to their newspaper publication and year. Each story was given a number from 1 to 30. The number of articles was reduced to eighteen using systematic sampling. By the use of this sampling method, I randomly selected two articles per year from all the publications, a list of all articles selected is represented below:

1. Author: Kyle Zeeman

Title: The People's Bae on his absent dad: I told him God is the only father I know

Year:2018

Url:<https://www.timeslive.co.za/tshisa-live/tshisa-live/2018-06-04-the-peoples-bae-on-his-absent-dad-i-told-him-god-is-the-only-father-i-know/>

2. Author: Reader Letter

Title: Teen mothers are taking social grants for themselves

Year:2018

Url:<https://https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/opinion/letters/2018-03-29-teen-mothers--are-taking-social-grants--for-themselves/>

3. Author: Zamayirha Peter

Title: When there are no fathers

Year: 2018

Url:<https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/when-there-are-no-fathers-20180617-2>

4. Author: Yolanda Mhlungu

Title: The damaged family structure in African societies is a result of a lack of land

Year: 2018

Url:<https://www.news24.com/citypress/voices/the-damaged-family-structure-in-african-societies-is-a-result-of-lack-of-land-2018032>

5. Author: Brenda Masilela

Title: The everyday struggles, and hardship faced by single parents

Year: 2018

Url:<https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/the-everyday-struggles-hardship-faced-by-single-parents-15738079>

6. Author: Tannya Farber

Title: Our fathers, who art not pulling your weight ... it's time to man up

Year: 2018

Url:<https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/lifestyle/2018-07-13-our-fathers-who-art-not-pulling-your-weight--its-time-to-man-up/>

7. Author: Mikhail Petersen

Title: Putting an end to the 'grant queen' fallacy

Year: 2019

Url:<https://www.news24.com/news24/columnists/guestcolumn/putting-an-end-to-the-grant-queen-fallacy-20190428>

8. Author: Lesego Linda Plank and Portia Tsotetsi

Title: Black single fathers: a forgotten, but ever-present phenomenon

Year: 2019

Url:<https://www.news24.com/parent/Family/Parenting/black-single-fathers-a-forgotten-but-ever-present-phenomenon-20190802-2>

9. Author: Nokuthula Zwane

Title: Musos sing praises of their moms

Year: 2019

Url: <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/sundayworld/lifestyle/2019-05-13-musos-sing-praises-of-their-moms/>

10. Author: Lukhanyo Mtuta

Title: Most children in SA have absent fathers, says survey

Year: 2019

Url:<https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/most-children-in-sa-have-absent-fathers-says-survey-34066995>

11. Author: Lindi Masinga

Title: 'He will only pay R500': Single moms reveal their daily struggles

Year: 2019

Url: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/gauteng/he-will-only-pay-r500-single-moms-reveal-their-daily-struggles-20607471>

12. Author: Trudy Luthuli

Title: Single women rising to the top, but are we robbing our future selves?

Year: 2019

Url:<https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/business/money/2019-05-30-single-women-rising-to-the-top-but-are-we-robbing-our-future-selves/>

13. Author: Wendy Knowler

Title: Supermarkets in Covid-19 lockdown | Single moms told, 'leave your child outside

Year:2020

Url:<https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2020-04-24-supermarkets-in-covid-19-lockdown-single-moms-told-leave-your-child-outside/>

14. Author: Nonhlanla Msibi

Title: WATCH | Lerato Mvelase clears the air: I celebrate all single moms - with or without degrees

Year:2020

Url:<https://www.timeslive.co.za/tshisa-live/tshisa-live/2020-05-03-watch--lerato-mvelase-clears-the-air-i-celebrate-all-single-moms-with-or-without-degree>

15. Author: Elizabeth Mamacos

Title: Heartlines study on fatherhood in South Africa: 'It's complicated

Year: 2020

Url:<https://www.heartlines.org.za/fathers-matter/media/heartlines-study-on-fatherhood-in-south-africa-its-complicated>

16. Author: Parent24

Title: The challenges are magnified': A single parent's survival guide

Year: 2020

Url:<https://www.news24.com/parent/family/parenting/a-single-parents-survival-guide-20191203>

17. Author: Via Nappy. co

Title: Financial resilience of SA single moms under pressure due to Covid-19

Year: 2020

Url:<https://www.iol.co.za/personal-finance/columnists/financial-resilience-of-sa-single-moms-under-pressure-due-to-covid-19-c7657159-6e40-4cdb-83bf-c238d4ab81e8>

18. Author: Amanda Maliba

Title: Beneath single mothers' hard work lies deep-seated pain, says ex-journo in a new book

Year:2020

Url: <https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/news/beneath-single-mothers-hard-work-lies-deep-seated-pain-says-ex-journo-in-new-book-3d003942-99d7-4619-86c5-1c23ca1f9757>

## **5.4 Data analysis**

Qualitative data were analyzed as follows:

### **5.4.1 Post-colonial textual analysis**

The purposively selected scenes of the documentary were transcribed and after transcribing, it was then analyzed for emerging themes. A post-colonial textual analysis was used to analyze the transcribed data from the documentary scenes. This data analysis method was developed by combining Sabido's (2016) Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis and textual analysis. Therefore, the postcolonial textual analysis method that I utilized included semiotic analysis which is a method of doing textual analysis and elements from Sabido's Postcolonial Critical discourses analysis. Sabido's (2016) Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA) provides a useful approach to the analysis of media content by focusing on the postcolonial relations of power, social inequality, race, and gender discrimination that underpin the production of content (Sabido, 2016).

The element includes:

1. Demystification of text (language).

This is used to unveil hidden meaning embedded in text that reflects power relations, postcolonial conditions, and inequalities.

2. Linguistic context

This looks at the language that surrounds and accompanies the piece of discourse being analyzed.

3. Extratextual context.

This looks at the non-linguistic context in the production of text.

#### 4. Temporal context.

This highlights the relevance of the postcolonial context, and the relevance, and implications of the historical and contemporary context of political, economic, and cultural conditions.

#### 5. The comparative analysis.

This is about outlining how the events in the discourse relate to the present.

Textual analysis is "...an educated guess at some of the likely interpretations that might be made of that text" (Mckee, 2001: 3). The textual analysis method used is the application of semiotic analysis. "Semiotic is the study of how meaning occurs in language, pictures performance and other forms of expressions" (Tomaselli, 1996: 29). According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014: 248), "Semiotic analysis involves the study of signs and deconstructing the connotative and denotative meaning of a text." In the semiotic of the scenes, the study employed Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction of two components of signs namely; the signifier, which is the form which the sign takes, and the signified, which is what the concept represents.

Moreover, I employed the categories of signs that formed part of Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction namely; a symbolic sign which arbitrary does not resemble the signified; an iconic sign which resembles the signified; and an indexical sign which directly gives an interpretation of the sign (Chandler, 1994). Additionally, I used Charles Sanders Peirce's triad of signs. Peirce explains the triad of signs by proposing the triple origin of existence; the first encounter (firstness), the experience (secondness), and the intelligible (thirdness) (Tomaselli, 1996). Reading the selected scenes in '*Last Grave at Dimbaza*' revealed the ways this media discourse constructs the impacts of the apartheid system on black families during the apartheid era in South Africa.

#### **5.4.2 Thematic analysis**

The thematic analysis method was used to systematically identify, organize and offer insight into the patterns of themes from the post-colonial textual analysis of the documentary scenes. The researcher used the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyze the patterns of themes from the post-colonial textual analysis and the analysis of online newspaper articles.

#### Phase 1: Become familiar with the data

In this phase, I went through all the themes that were identified during the post-colonial textual analysis. This helped me to be familiar with the emerged themes from the scenes. With the online newspaper article, I read and re-read all the selected articles to ensure that I was familiar with the entire body of data.

#### Phase 2: Generating initial codes

In this phase, I started systematically organizing the themes. Codes are building blocks of analysis. The themes that emerged from the post-colonial analysis of scenes were presented as codes as they addressed the research objectives. With the stories, I allowed the data to determine the themes. This was a deductive thematic analysis rather than an inductive one. Given this, I coded each segment of data with the theme that emerged from the data and those which were relevant to the research objectives.

#### Phase 3: Search for themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme is a pattern that captures something significant about the data and the research objections. In addition, the theme is characterized by its significance. Therefore, I examined the emerging themes from the scenes and others to fit them together into one theme. The themes described the patterns in the data relevant to the research objectives. This process was also applied to themes that emerged from the articles.

#### Phase 4: Review themes

In this phase, I reviewed, modified the themes identified, and confirmed whether they supported the data associated with each theme. The next step was to explore whether the themes work concerning the data. Thus, I had to ask myself questions such as; what is the quality of this theme? What are the boundaries of this? Does the data support the theme?. This was to ensure that all themes were coherent. The process was applied when analyzing the articles and the post-colonial textual analysis themes.

#### Phase 5: Define themes

This is the final refinement of the themes and it identifies the essence of what each theme is all about. I confirmed and checked what each theme was all about. If there



were subthemes that emerged, I determined how they related to the main themes. For example, there were subthemes about the effect of absent fathers on children Colonial-apartheid destruction of a black family, and the generational absence of fatherhood which were related to the main theme which is the intergenerational father absence.

#### Phase 6: Producing the report

This is the final phase of analysis where I transformed the analysis into an interpretable piece of writing by compelling extract examples that relate to the themes, research objectives, existing literature, and theoretical framework employed in this research. This is visible in the subsequent chapters on data analysis and presentation.

### **5.5 Quality criteria**

Quality criteria cover aspects such as credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. These aspects are used for assessing the quality of qualitative research to ensure that the research is timely, original, rigorous, and relevant (Stenfors, Kajamaa & Bennett, 2020).

#### **5.5.1 Credibility**

Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout (2014) define credibility as the accuracy with which the researcher interpreted the data that was provided by the participants. In this study, the researcher collected data from newspaper articles for three years to ensure that enough data were collected.

#### **5.5.2 Transferability**

Transferability is the ability of the findings to be applied to a similar study and deliver similar findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). In this study, I used reliable data collection methods and provided a detailed description of the environment of data collection. Furthermore, the findings were discussed with existing literature and other studies of its kind.

#### **5.5.3 Dependability**

Dependability is the ability of the process of integration that takes place between the data collection method, data analysis, and theory derived from the data (Du Plooy-

Cilliers, et al., 2014). I continuously re-examined the data collected by using themes that emerged in the data analysis stage until no new themes emerged.

#### **5.5.4 Conformability**

Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) describe conformability as how well the data collected support the researcher's conclusion and interpretation. It also demonstrates how well the results flow from the data. In this research, I provided an evaluation of the methodology used, all the data collection and data analysis steps were followed correctly to avoid subjectivity and allow other researchers to replicate the study.

#### **5.6 Ethical Consideration**

##### **Permission for the study**

The researcher was granted a ethical clearance certificate from the University of Limpopo, Turfloop Campus by the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) to conduct the study. Data collected in this study were collected from a public domain of online published newspaper articles and a documentary film.

##### **Objectivity**

To ensure objectivity in this study, I have taken each step objectively and drawn each conclusion to the best of my ability without introducing my vested interest.

#### **5.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explained the steps taken in this study relating to the research methodology. The research methodology discussion contains the research design, data collection methods, population and sampling, data analysis, and quality criteria– which have been discussed in this chapter. The next chapter will be the presentation and interpretation of findings from the documentary film, '*Last Grave at Dimbaza*'.

## CHAPTER 6

### LAST GRAVE AT DIMBAZA: A POST-COLONIAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA CONSTRUCTION OF APARTHEID'S DESTRUCTION OF BLACK FAMILIES

*(First chapter of data presentation)*

#### 6.1 Introduction

Since this study is about the media discourse of female-headed households from a post-colonial perspective, this chapter explores the media discourse of black families during apartheid. To understand the current prevalent nature of absent fatherhood in South Africa, it is important to understand South Africa's past. Van Straaten, Wilschut & Oostdam (2015) highlight that the past plays a major role in understanding the present and the future. South Africa is today a result of its past. To understand the current absent masculinity and highlight feminine resilience in South Africa, one needs to trace the country's history and the entanglement it has in shaping the modern South African family structure (Terreblanche, 2002).

*'Last Grave at Dimbaza'* serves as a historical example of media construction of black families showing the experience of single motherhood and absent fatherhood during apartheid. Dimbaza, among other things, can be evoked ambiguously as a homeland resettlement village, a betterment rural township, a decentralised industrialization showcase, a site of political exile, an international symbol of apartheid difference, and a graveyard of the racially discarded during apartheid (Minkley & Pohlandt-McCormick, 2017). In 1967, the apartheid state established Dimbaza as a resettlement village in the Ciskei bantustan, now part of the Eastern Cape (Minkley & Pohlandt-McCormick, 2017). Like other similar settlements, it was part of apartheid's massive social engineering project known as 'forced removals.' Dimbaza was a form of what Giorgio Agamben (1998) called "bare life" which marked the most tragic deaths of hundreds of children from malnutrition and tuberculosis in the first few years of their existence.

*Last Grave at Dimbaza* captures some aspects of life in this former Bantustan during apartheid. It showcases how media constructed stories about absent fatherhood and single motherhood during apartheid. However, it broadly captures the experiences of

black families in South Africa during apartheid. The documentary is available on YouTube, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHH5sA-GB20>).

As discussed in the methodology chapter, *Last Grave at Dimbaza* is a documentary that was produced by South African exiles during Apartheid. Although the entire documentary is about the nature of lives in apartheid South Africa and the impoverished lives of Black South Africans as juxtaposed occasionally with the privileged lives of White South Africans, some scenes directly draw attention to black families and absent fatherhood. This makes the documentary essential for this research. The following six scenes were selected and analyzed from the documentary (I have come up with descriptive titles for these scenes):

Scene 1: Migrant Labor and absent fathers: Men in shacks or hostels.

Scene 2: Poverty and feminine resilience: Living conditions of women in homelands.

Scene 3: Poverty and upbringing: The experience of children in the homelands (Dimbaza).

Scene 4: Migrant labour and single motherhood: The experience of black motherhood.

Scene 5: Migrant labour and African life: Destruction of African family life.

Scene 6: Lost Generation: Lives of children lost as a result of the labour migrancy system.

## **6.2 Postcolonial Textual Analysis**

As thoroughly explained in the methodology chapter, the scenes from the documentary were analyzed using post-colonial textual analysis. This method is developed by combining the analysis method in Sabido's Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis and textual analysis. Therefore, the postcolonial textual analysis method that I utilized here included semiotic analysis which is a method of doing textual analysis and elements from Sabido's Postcolonial Critical discourses analysis. The six scenes from the documentary were chosen using purposive sampling of scenes that captured events that related to black families.

## **6.3 Analysis**

The analysis here follows a two-step process. Firstly, I present a description of the events in each scene, which includes both the video and audio elements. Secondly, I

engage the reading of the scene through a postcolonial textual analysis frame as discussed above.

### **Scene 1: Migrant labour and absent fathers: Men in shacks/ hostel**

Timestamp and duration: 00:16-2:49

Audio/music: Solemn sound invoking sadness, pity, and pain.

Description: The scene opens with a board establishing the setting of the scene in Langa, a black township outside of Cape Town. We see rows of shacks/dirty buildings that show the absence of any form of social services or infrastructure. The scene cuts to the inside of the rooms in the shacks, the walls are dirty, and there is a long table made of concrete. Next to it, there is a man washing clothes in a steel basin in the kitchen area. The scene move to the bedroom where clothes are hanging over the room, the food shelves, and the men's luggage are the dividers separating two beds that are made of concrete. The room is dark and there is no window. Then the scene cuts to the outside of the shacks again where men are doing laundry using tin buckets while others are just sitting and smoking. This reflects a day off for the workers. The scene cuts to a different setting showing women and children sitting outside as if they are waiting for someone. They look anxiously as if expecting something or waiting for something. A pregnant woman is seen in an old torn shirt looking forlorn into the camera. The scene then cuts back to the men in the hostel sitting outside in the sun. The events in the scene juxtapose the settings of the lives of men with that of their wives and children. None of the characters speaks, no diegetic sound in this scene.

Male Voice-over narration:

Langa is a black township, just outside Cape Town South Africa, under the South African system of apartheid blacks were forced to live in segregated ghettos outside the city where they work. These shacks used to be homes for black families but now white government turned them into barricades for male workers only. The shacks are divided into compartments. There are 18 men in each compartment. Sunday is the only day off for these workers but they cannot spend it with their families because their wives and children have been evicted and resettled into special rural areas, the Bantustans. The government keeps men here to work in the factories and docks of Cape Town, they live in these labour camps and can only return to the Bantustans for one month every year. For the other 11 months, their

wives in the Bantustans can do nothing except wait, for news and money from them. The nearest Bantustans are over 300 miles away and the government act prevents the women and children from joining their husbands in the township. The government's justification for their policy of splitting black families was given by Mr. Forman when he was the deputy minister of justice. He said, "Black workers must not be burdened with superfluous appendages like women and children". Over 50% of black workers in their families are now forced to live apart and here in Cape Town, the figure has reached 85%. In this film, we show what is like for the black people of South Africa to be on the receiving end of the white government's apartheid policies.

### **Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 1: Migrant labour and absent fathers: Men in shacks/ hostel**

The voice narration at the beginning of the scene says "These shacks used to be homes for black families, but now white government turned them into barricades for male workers only". The Firstness/iconic or denotative meaning of this narration highlights how black families used to live together as a family unit before the introduction of the migrant labour system which separated men from their families. The narration further emphasizes that black families used to live as a unit, showing that they valued family but now they are separated as a result of the introduction of the migrant labour system that forced women and children to live in the Bantustans while men remain in the shacks. Women and children were regarded as a burden to men who worked at the mines, hence, they were forced to remain in the Bantustans (Simkins & Dlamini, 1992).

This describes the secondness or indexical sign that signified the meaning of this narration. Additionally, this relates to Sabido's element of demystification in this text, which unveil hidden meaning in a text in this narration there is a sense of power inequality and oppression of black people as they did not have the power to decide where they want to live because the government chose for them as per the condition of the labour migrancy. The meaning unveiled in the form of demystification symbolizes the thirdness/symbolic/connotative meaning of this narration, which highlight the nature of apartheid racial capitalism that broke black family. The breaking of the black family structure was essential to the success of the white economy. In

essence, the wealth of white South Africa was built on the destruction of black families. This scene also relates to a long temporal context as some men are still living in single-men hostels in post-colonial South Africa. This indicates how the colonial experience influences the present.

Further, the sound of the guitar playing in the background in the scene invoked the firstness/iconic/denotative meaning that relates to the setting of the scene and the emotion that the scene invokes. This first encounter of the sound relates to the non-linguistic context in which the production of the text reveals a painful setting that black men were going through under the apartheid government and its policies. Secondness /indexical/connotative meaning symbolizes the feeling of pain, sadness, and pity associated with the living conditions of men.

As the scene cuts to the inside of the house we can see dirty and peeling walls. Firstness/the iconic or denotative interpretation of this scene also known as the signifier is that the walls are dirty and the paint is peeling off showing the white first coat of paint that was used on the wall. Secondness/the indexical or connotative signifies that the apartheid government or the labour migrant system did not care about the living condition of men in the barricades. The thirdness/symbolic level of this scene symbolizes poverty and the neglect of black men living in the shacks. Relating to the extratextual context, these walls describe the place where black men were dehumanized, treated as if they are not human, and neglected as their power was taken away from them as they participated in the labour migrancy.

Furthermore, when the scene cuts to a room that looks like a bedroom we can see clothes hung all over the room and the men's luggage and food shelf in between the two beds whose base was made of concrete. This is the firstness/the iconic or denotative interpretation of this scene. The secondness/indexical sign signifies of this scene is that room or house is overcrowded there is no space to accommodate all the men's luggage and clothes. The thirdness/symbolic level of this scene suggests that men are not regarded as human beings, they can live in an overcrowded space, and sleep on a bed base that is made of concrete which is known to be hard and uncomfortable. This relates to Sabido's Temporal context which relates colonial events with social identity. These harsh living conditions for men led to a culture of hyper-masculinity as they were belittled and dehumanized. As such, it creates a desire for

spaces where they could display authority and masculine power (Breckenridge, 1998). The hyper-masculinity is still evident to date.

Moreover, the camera moves outside the house showing men sitting outside the house smoking, which is the firstness/the iconic or denotative interpretation of this image. Secondness/the indexical or connotative meaning takes us further as the image draws our attention to what it refers to that might not be seen physically. In this, image the man looks lonely and hopeless. It was Sunday, and they were not at work, but they were alone and lonely and could not spend this downtime with their families. The thirdness/ symbolic level of this image symbolizes powerlessness. These men are supposed to be spending their day off with their families but are unable to do so because their families are sent to the bantustans. The demystification of text on this image suggests that the migrant labour system stole decision powers from men by keeping them in single-sex hostels and restricting men to live with their families.

The voice-over narration highlights that “For the other 11 months their wives in the Bantustans can do nothing except to wait for news and money from them”. This narration is the firstness/iconic or denotative meaning of the scene. Secondness/the indexical or connotative interpretation of this narration presents women as passive beings with no agency, who are dependent on their husbands because they cannot do anything to empower themselves. Also, it highlights that there were no opportunities for women in the Bantustans, women could not generate an income besides the one sent by their husbands. Furthermore, men being away for 11 months of the year meant that households were headed by women including childbearing which created a double burden for women. According to Nicholson (1997), women’s reproductive functions were limited to their home and that created a second shift of unpaid household work, childcare as well as waged work.

Thirdness/the symbolic level of this narration symbolizes powerlessness and gender inequality and oppression and victimization of women in a scene where they could not enter the labour market nor join their husbands in the city.



## **Scene 2: Poverty and living conditions of women in the Bantustans (“Women grow old in their twenties”)**

Timestamps and during 06:47-10:20

Audio/music: Wind blowing sound

Description: The scene opens with a woman cooking outside, using a cow dung to make fire, while children with potbellies sit motionless on the ground, probably waiting for the meal to be cooked. One has fallen asleep while seated. The environment is so dry and the land is eroded and dry and unsuitable for any form of farming. The scene cuts to a woman carrying a bucket of water on her head, which shows indoor plumbing or potable water in the house. The scene then cuts to the inside of a hut, which is dark and empty of any furniture, with light barely shining in through a small window. There were two women, one making/grinding maize meal while the other one was sitting down on the floor with two children. The scene cuts back outside to rows of shacks in the Bantustans and cuts to inside the shacks. We see the inside of a one-room shack with females sitting, walls are decorated with newspaper cutting and pictures of family members, including a picture of two men whose presence is symbolized by the picture on the wall.

Voice-over narration:

This woman and her family live in the Transkei Bantustans, like all the Bantustans the Transkei is desperately poor and underdeveloped. They are as one black leader said “a cesspool of poverty, ignorance, and disease”. The potbellies and the apathy of these children are the all too familiar signs of malnutrition. For a family to survive the man has to go away to the city to work for the whites, it is often impossible for the women left behind to grow enough food because drought and soil erosion have destroyed the land. An official report estimated that the Bantustans would provide subsistence living for only two and a half million people and today 7 million people are forced to live in them. As more people headed to live in the Bantustans, the standard of living declined further. The income of each person here is now only 13 pounds a year, among the lowest in the world, and yet only 100 years ago before the white conquest, the forefathers of these people were famous for large herds of cattle. Today the children are in tatters and the women grow old in their 20s.

The white government claims that under apartheid the blacks can develop separately in the Bantustans, but the conditions of life here are devoid modicum of any of the government's claim of separate development, for even the government pretends that there is any land for the people they are moving to the Bantustans from the townships. Most of these families are put in special camps like this one. This is called Usizweni and it is in the Kwa Zulu Bantustan. Families who lived here all their lives in towns are given a one-room house like this for a new home. There is nothing for these families here, no land and no work, the people in this camp try to survive on the meager earnings from their absent husbands, brothers, and sons who are away working in the cities. The government's justification for these massive removals was given by Mr. Botha the minister of Bantu Administration and development that "The Bantu people like to be moved, the Bantu people like the placed where they are being resettled". Already in the last 10 years, 1.5 million people have been moved and the government plans to uproot a further 4 million blacks in the largest forced removal of people in peacetime. The government provides practically no service or facilities for those already forced to live in the Bantustans, let alone those who have been resettled.

### **Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 2: Poverty and living conditions of women in the Bantustans ("Women grow old in their twenties")**

The scene shows us the living conditions of women in the bantustans under the apartheid government. The Firstness/iconic/denotative interpretation of the beginning of the scene is that the scene opens with a woman cooking outside using dry cow dung. She is using cow dung to make fire as there is no sign of wood that can be used and the cow dung is the only accessible resource that she can use because the land is dry because of soil erosion. Secondness/indexical meaning takes us to a deeper interpretation of the meaning of the icon in the first encounter. This image is associated with poverty and a lack of social services from the government. The dry land indicates that there is no means of growing crops or food. This puts pressure on women as they were poor and dependent on the money their husbands sent. However, for some women, their husbands never sent money as they spent it on alcohol making the feeling of loneliness, pain, and despair of being away from their homes disappear while others broke ties with their families in the bantustans (Crush, Jeeves & Yudelman, 1991).

Women in the bantustans experienced a double burden of child-caring and financial responsibilities as described by Hochschild (1989) in her double burden feminist theory. The extratextual context in the text highlight the setting of apartheid and how women were affected by the force removal policy that separated women from their husbands and created a void in the black family structure. Women were forced to rear children without fathers under extremely adverse conditions. They were forced to provide agricultural labour on the barren land almost making the field non-existent which increased frustration and hardship (Oliver-Evans, 1992). Thirdness refers to the symbolic level of the scene which has no direct interpretation or connection to the images presented. This image or scene presents women as victims of the apartheid government, their resilience in overcoming poverty and hardship conditions in the bantustans are not displayed in this scene and throughout the film.

### **Scene 3: Living conditions and the experience of children in the Bantustans**

Timestamp and duration: 10:20-12:39

Audio/Music: Voices of women and children crying

Description: The scene opens with women and children walking to the clinic, with several other women and children queuing at the clinic. Some women are seen with their babies strapped to their bags and bags of belongings balanced on their heads. The scene cuts to the room of the clinic where it is overcrowded and there is only one white doctor that attends to the children and women. The scene then cuts to children in the hospital eating. It is obvious that the children were not only in the hospital for treatment but also get free meals provided by the clinic.

Voice-over narration:

These women and children are walking to a clinic in a Transkei Bantustan. They are walking from villages up to 20 miles away, often setting up before dawn. Each week over 400 people attend clinics held here by staff from the mission hospital most of them are suffering from malnutrition. Here one among five people has tuberculosis and the major malnutrition among children. Kwashiorkor has increased by 300% over the last 4 years. The nurses and doctors from Holland do what they can, but their resources are inadequate for the basic needs of the people. In South Africa, there is one doctor for every 400 whites and one doctor for 44,000 blacks. Of the 40,000 cases of malnutrition treated by doctors every year, there are over one and

a half million who are never seen of those who are seen the lucky few receive treatment in one of the overcrowded black hospitals. For many, their first trip to the hospital means their first proper meal. With this food, most of the children will recover but six months after their release from the hospital many of them get back to suffering from malnutrition again. There is nothing their mothers can do, they are too poor to feed them properly. Two doctors who collected figures in the typical Bantustan discovered that 50% of the children die before the age of 5.

### **Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 3: Living conditions and the experience of children in the Bantustans**

Apartheid policies and laws that were made by the White government made Africans powerless in their land and deliberately eroded the traditional African family structure (Welsh, 2009). The policies and laws resulted in critical living conditions for fatherless children in the bantustans as the health resources were inadequate to meet their needs, the voice-over narration became the iconic sign in this scene. The increase of 300% over the last 4 years of malnutrition and kwashiorkor among children is an indexical sign of poverty and poor nutrition in the bantustans. Women were too poor to provide their children with proper nutrition because of poverty and unemployment. Women depended on the money that their husbands sent them. These women's reproductive functions were limited to their homes. This relates to Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) argument that women were forced to focus on motherhood, femininity, and being erotic objects instead of being involved in politics or anything else outside the home and family. This made them victims of multiple oppressions.

The symbolic sign of unemployment among black women is related to the comparative analysis in that black women still experience the vulnerability of unemployment. This was confirmed by Statistics South Africa (2020) that 35% of black women are unemployed in South Africa, which is the highest unemployment rate as compared to women in other racial groups. This means that children's living conditions today are similar to the living conditions of those during apartheid. That is, children still live in poverty because their mothers are poor to provide for them. Uchenna (2013) supplements that children raised in single-mother households are linked with poverty. Therefore, we can say that post-colonialism is not just a condition but a continuity of the past (Said, 1993).

Furthermore, the voice-over narration at the symbolic level presents a 'White saviour' narration, where only one white doctor has an interest in saving the lives of black children in the bantustans. Although these children's health conditions are created by the white government, the government focused on racial capitalism and neglected the social needs of black people 'in South Africa. There is one doctor for every 400 whites and one doctor for 44,000 blacks. This means that only one doctor attended to the cases of malnutrition and only limited hospitals accommodated the lucky few children who can receive treatment for malnutrition. The lives of non-whites were neglected while the white were given advantages in all critical areas such as agriculture, education, health care, housing, and employment (Clark & Worger, 2011). This relates to linguistic context and raises the issue of race, class, and social oppression.

#### **Scene 4: The experience of black motherhood and fatherhood**

Timestamp and duration: 21:18-22:20

Audio/music: There is no background music in this scene

Description: The scene opens with a white woman sitting on a swimming pool lounge chair reading a magazine and her husband lying down in the pool area relaxing. The scene then cuts to the inside of the house and shows three black servants working. One is a black maid making a bed while the other, a younger maid, is pregnant washing dishes. A male servant is seen tidying up the living room. The scene then cuts to the servants' quarters outside in the back of the main house. The scene moves back to the house and showed the pregnant maid feeding a white child and the other black maid cooking. The scene then transitioned to a hospital showing the pregnant maid now with twin children, and her husband dressed proudly in a suit and tie standing next to his wife.

Voice-over narration:

This home is in a suburb of Johannesburg, three servants work and live here. They earn 2.40 pounds a week. They are on-call 24 hours a day 6 days a week. Their families are forbidden to stay with them here, for this is a white area. The servants' rooms are in the backyard and by law have to be separated from the house. Mrs. Gertrude Mbatha (the older maid) has been a servant since the age of 15. Her husband lives 30 miles away in Soweto. She sees him once a week on her day off. She works so that they can pay for their four children to go to school. Since her

children are forbidden to stay with her here, she sent them 300 miles away to a relative in the Bantustans. She's lucky if she can see them once a year.

Mrs. Nkosi looks after Melissa (the white daughter of her employer). She has one daughter of her own, her only son died from malnutrition. When she accepted this job, she had to send her daughter away to friends in the Bantustans. Her husband lives in an all-male Barrack in Soweto, she is forbidden to stay with him there, he is forbidden to stay with her here. When these pictures were taken she was about to have a baby. A few weeks later she gave birth to twins in the local black hospital. They will have no choice but to send them away to friends as soon as they are weaned so that she can continue to look after Melissa and earn the money to keep them alive.

#### **Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 4: The experience of black motherhood and fatherhood**

The scene opens with a couple sitting by the poolside, then moves to the house where we see a black domestic worker in her uniform making a bed and the narrator says "Mrs. Gertrude Mbatha has been a servant since the age of 15 her husband lives 30 miles away in Soweto she sees him once a week on her day off, she works so that she and her husband can pay for their four children to go to school since her children are forbidden to stay with her here she sent them 300 miles away to a relative in the Bantustans, she's lucky if she can see them once a year". The voice narration is the iconic interpretation of the scene or the firstness encounter of the scene also known as the denotative meaning of the voice narration.

When the voice-over narrator said "Mrs. Gertrude Mbatha has been a servant since the age of 15", this signifies that black women grew up knowing that they are inferior to white people and they should work for them as there were no other empowering programs placed for black people. Immediately in her teenage age, she was a domestic worker while white girls her age were at school. This relates to extratextual context, the purpose of this narration is to highlight signs of oppression, race, gender, and power inequalities. This contemporary context is still evident in the post-colonial days, due to the high rate of unemployment amongst black women, young women are forced to take over their mother's space when they retire from their white employees, to fill their space while their mothers move back to the rural areas. They also send their children to be looked after by their mothers in rural areas hence most

children are under the care of their grandparents/mothers and their mothers are said to be working in the city.

Due to the apartheid policies and laws, mothers/women were not allowed to stay with their children and they were forced to send them to the bantustans, and their mothers can see them once a year. According to this voice narrator, mothers were denied the opportunity to experience the motherhood phase and create a bond with their children. They were oppressed by the apartheid law. This signifies the neglect of black motherhood and creates a vacuum in the mother's life. A mother's presence is important in a child's life and creates a sense of security, warmth, and belonging. However, this mother could not give her children that feeling because her employment contract does not allow her to be there for her children. After all, she must be present in her employer's child while hers are faced poverty and malnutrition in the bantustans. This is the secondness/connotative or indexical interpretation of the first part of this scene. Thirdness/the symbolic level of this voice-narration is that motherhood should not be a priority for domestic workers they should always serve their masters and the fact that Gertrude can only see her children once a year if it is lucky, symbolizes class inequality and oppression of black mothers who are servants.

The camera then moves to another servant or domestic worker Mrs. Nkosi who was pregnant when the documentary was filmed. The camera then moved to the hospital showing a nurse holding Mrs. Nkosi's twin babes by the door. Figure 6.1 is the image of Mr. and Mrs. Nkosi the parents of the newly born babies, with Mr. Nkosi in a suit alongside his wife. This describes the firstness/iconic or denotative interpretation of the image.



Figure 6.1: Screenshot of Mr. and Mrs. Nkosi at the hospital after the birth of their twin babies

The secondness/indexical or connotative interpretation of the image is that Mr. Nkosi wears a suit because he is honoring the moment. The birth of his twins is an important event in his life. His attire symbolizes the importance of fatherhood and power. Fatherhood in African societies is associated with power and the responsibility for the entire *family*—“*Ubaba Walayikaya*”, which means the head of the family (Hunter, 2006: 101). Mr. Nkosi is honoring the moment because he knew that the twins will have to be taken home in the bantustans to be raised by relatives or friends as children were not permitted to reside in the city because of the apartheid laws. Mr. Nkosi knew that under the condition migrant labour system he was going to be robbed of the opportunity to see his twins grow older and fulfill his fatherhood role. Also, for Mrs. Nkosi, she knew that she will leave the twins in the bantustans to return to work and care for her employees’ children while her twins will be under the care of someone else. The thirdness/ symbolism level of this image symbolizes the importance of black fatherhood and a feeling of proudness. This relates to the extratextual context which highlights the apartheid setting and the experience of fatherhood and motherhood under the oppression period.



## **Scene 5: The disruption of black family life: Separation of men from their families**

Timestamp and duration: 30:08-31:20

Audio/music: voices of men

Description: The scene opens with a board establishing the setting of the scene in Wolhuter Native Men's Hostel. The camera pans and moves to show the massive size of the men's hostel. We see men hanging around the building and outside the building.

Voice-over narration:

Assured of the support of Western companies, the government continues to carry out its twin apartheid policies of resettlement and migrant labour. They are accelerating the removal from the township of all Blacks who do not qualify as 'serving the needs of the white man. To do this, they are undertaking a massive program of building single-sex hostels in all the townships. These giant barracks house the men whose wives and children are being sent to the Bantustans. The government's ultimate aim is all the blacks should officially live in the Bantustans. However, the men and women needed by the farms, factories, and kitchens of white South Africa should spend 11 months of every year in these single-sex labour camps. Their commitment to the destruction of black family life is unambiguous. Mr. Frohman, an apartheid government official, said "We are trying to introduce the migrant labor pattern as far as possible in every sphere. This is in fact, the entire basis of our policy as far as the white economy is concerned".

### **Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 5: The disruption of black family life: Separation of men from their families**

The migrancy labor system imposed on black men destroyed African values, culture, and tradition as the narrator said: "Their commitment to the destruction of black family life is unambiguous Mr frontman has said we are trying to introduce the migrant labor pattern as far as possible in every sphere. This is in fact, the entire basis of our policy as far as the white economy is concerned". This is described as the iconic or denotative meaning of this voice-narration. The indexical or connotative meaning of this narration is that the apartheid government's commitment was to destroy the black family structure by forcing men to work in the mine while placing them in single-sex

hostels where there were conditions to spend their time there away from their families. The white government introduced the migrant labour system to grow the white economy and to achieve their goals. They had to force men into the labour migrant system and break family ties because they knew how African people value family. In the Bantu society, the family played a very significant role in social organisation. Therefore, they had to break the social unit to grow their economy and African families burnt the scare of white's economic goals. This narration tells us that there is no hope for African families to recover from this destruction. Thus, African families will never be the same. This relates to the comparative analysis. According to Statistics South Africa (2018), about 43.1% of South African children live with their mothers and their fathers are absent. This fosters a culture of female-headed households and a dominant form of household.

The symbolism level of this voice-narration is that South Africa's economic transformation through the mining and farming industries damaged African families. This contemporary analysis context relates to the current pattern of fatherhood absence (intergenerational transmission of father absence) as men and many fathers are still missing pictures in families. According to Lesejane (2006), sons are taught to inherit their father's fatherhood patterns and leadership skills. Thus, intergenerational transmission of the father role is passed from one generation to another, and if the father was absent in the son's upbringing, the son will also inherit the pattern of fatherhood. This may result in an intergenerational cycle of father absence which is evident in South Africa today. Therefore, the colonial legacies continue to shape most spheres of life in the post-colony, including the social sphere.

### **Scene 6: Lost generation: Freshly dug graves for children**

Timestamp and duration: 31:21-34:07

Audio/music: Solemn sound invoking sadness, pity, and pain.

Description: The scene opens with a road sign establishing the setting of the scene in Dimbaza Bantustan, in the Eastern Cape. The scene cuts to a wide shot of tiny houses, then to rows of huts that were built in Dimbaza, showing the absence of any form of social service and proper infrastructure. Then the scene cuts to the inside of the huts. Inside we see walls covered by newspapers used as wallpapers. There is a close-up shot of an old man staring directly at the camera and an old woman sitting rather

forlorn, and children sleeping on the floor. The scene cuts to the fresh graveyard with a white cross on each grave. There is a close-up shot of a headstone for a one-year-old child. The scene ends with a shot of a row of freshly dug graves for small coffins.

Voice-over narration:

And in the Bantustans, they are building more and more resettlement camps like in Usizweni and Dimbaza. The first huts were built in 1968 but the majority of the 7,000 people who live here now have moved from towns in the last 3 years. Once you can no longer work for the whites this is how they dispose of you. There have been many deaths in the Dimbaza in the last 3 years. By 1973 there were 60 adult graves and 450 children's graves. This is a special children's graveyard, nearly all the children died before the age of two. These graves have been dug in preparation for the next month's toll. During the hour you have been watching this film, in South Africa, six black families have been thrown out of their homes, 60 blacks have been arrested under the pass laws and 60 black children have died of the effects of malnutrition. And during the same hour, the gold mining companies made a profit of 35,000 pounds.

### **Postcolonial textual analysis of scene 6: Freshly dug graves for children**

The film ends in Dimbaza, and in the concluding sequences, the camera lingers on the graves marked with baby bottles and small hand-lettered crosses, and on a line of small open graves extending in one shot to the horizon. The sad background music symbolizes a dark and sad period in Dimbaza where women had to bury their children while their fathers are in mines in the city contributing to the growth of the white economy.

Thousands of children lost their lives as a result of widespread poverty which is reflected in the extensive malnutrition and diseases. Figure 6.2 illustrates empty graves dug for small coffins. This describes the firstness/iconic or denotative interpretation of this image.



Figure 6.2: A screenshot of freshly dug graves for small coffins

The secondness/indexical/connotative interpretation of the image is that more children were dying as compared to any other age group. The high death toll rate of children due to diseases, malnutrition, and poverty resulted in the apartheid government digging a large number of graves to prepare for more death because they knew that the then government would not do anything to reduce the death rates. With the activity of demystification, it could be assumed that the government was prepared to bury children rather than save their lives by improving the health services for these children. The government's main priority was racial capitalism which destroyed black families under the apartheid system.

The thirdness/symbolism of this image is that there was no hope that children will live longer into their teenage stage let alone the adult stage. This symbolizes a lost generation because the graveyard was a place where dreams of children were buried. Like other similar settlements, this was part of apartheid's massive social engineering project known as 'forced removals. Dimbaza was a form of what Giorgio Agamben (1998) called "bare life", marked most tragically by the deaths of hundreds of children from malnutrition and tuberculosis in the first few years of their existence.

## **6.4 Thematic analysis**

As thoroughly explained in the methodology chapter, thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of themes from the post-colonial textual analysis of the scene (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The following themes emerged from the post-colonial textual analysis of the six scenes from the documentary, *Last Grave at Dimbaza*.

### **6.4.1 Apartheid racism and racial capitalism contributed to today's absent fatherhood**

The documentary address the issue of racial capitalism, and how men were racially oppressed, under the apartheid system. The condition of the migrant labour system forced black men to sell labour and live in single-sex overcrowded barracks in the absence of any form of social services exposing them to harsh conditions. In addition, their working conditions were harsh and thousands of men lost their lives due to the conditions in the mines. African men were dehumanized and reduced to mere producers of manual labour for the benefit of mine corporations and the British colonists.

The documentaries highlight how the apartheid government used black men's cheap labour to grow the mining industry and how black men were oppressed by the apartheid system through the introduction of the migrant labour system that forced all black men to sell their labour. The migrant labour system became a phenomenon in South Africa as well. It played an important role in the growth of the country's economy, but it also had a devastating effect on the African family structure. All men who entered the migrant labour system were separated from their families and sent to work in the city and their families were not allowed to live with them. This resulted in them (Black men) leaving many fatherless families behind. Due to the migrancy contract, migrant men were forced to live in the city for a year or three years without visiting their families in the reserves. The strain of the separation caused many men to break ties with their rural families. This resulted in poverty, destitution, and desertion in the rural homelands. Many families were left devastated in the rural areas, children grew up without fathers and wives without husbands. Thus, it is through the migrant labour system that the fatherless nation was birthed. The absent father pattern continued still as many young men migrated to the cities and never returned home to their families

in the bantustans. Children bore the brunt of the migrant system and apartheid policies and laws. The father absence pattern in black society is still relevant to date because many children are still living without their fathers. It can therefore be affirmed that South Africa is experiencing an intergenerational father absence. Black families are re-living the experiences of colonial and apartheid. In the post-colonial era, it is still evident that fathers are still a missing link in black families. This means that the absent fatherhood phenomenon in black societies has continued to the present, hence, black South Africans continue to experience intergenerational absent fatherhood. Although current socio-economic realities in post-apartheid South Africa have an impact on the family as a unit and absent fatherhood, the intergenerational legacies of colonial and apartheid destruction of the black family structure in South Africa cannot be dismissed.

#### **6.4.2 Erasure of women's resilience**

In the documentary, it is noticeable that there are no voices in all the scenes, the only voice in the entire documentary is that of the narrator (white man voice-over narrator). The narrator resembles the voice of the dominant race which the events that took place under apartheid were perpetuated. Thus, under the scene where women were displayed, they were presented as victims of the migrant labour system and the apartheid system as a whole. There, is no doubt that they were victims of apartheid however what they did to survive and raise their children during those harsh conditions was not recorded nor filmed. They were shown as lacking agency, as the narrator highlighted in scene one "For the other 11 months, their wives in the Bantustans can do nothing except wait for news and money from them". According to the apartheid government, women and children were a burden to men who worked at the mines, hence, they were forced to remain in the bantustans under strict apartheid laws and policies.

As a result of the matrix domination that black women experienced, they had to acquire skills and ways to provide for or feed their families in the bantustans as not all men sent money and others started their own families in the city and cut ties with their families in the bantustans. The documentary did not portray or show how women survived in the bantustans under the migrant labour system and apartheid laws and policies. Thus, their sacrifices and resilience are not highlighted as much in the scenes. The documentaries place focus on racial capitalism as well as the living and

working conditions of men in the city under the migrant labour system while women were seen as passive agents of the struggle.

This relates to Said's study of *'Orientalism pays little attention to female agency'*, and Bhabha's work on *'The ambivalence of colonialism'*. The two authors investigated the relationship between a colonizing subject and a colonized object without taking into account how gender specifics may complicate this model. Hence Davies (1994: 201) asked, "Where are the women in the theorizing of the post-coloniality", as the work of postcolonial theorists they are male-centered and erasing and misrepresents women's roles in the struggle for independence. Hence, postcolonial feminism is a response to colonialism and its legacies on women and recognizes the experiences of women, not only as victims of colonial oppression but as active agents in the struggle against it. However, in this documentary, women's resilience and sacrifices are not portrayed.

#### **6.4.3 The legacy of the migrant labour system and female-headed households**

The African families bore the brunt consequences of the migrant labour system in many ways: men were separated from their families and sent to the cities to sell their labour; women were forced to live in the bantustans and were forced to bear children without fathers under extremely adverse conditions; they were forced to provide the agricultural labour on the barren land that almost made the field non-existent which increased frustration and hardship for women and their families. As per the migrant labour system, men were only allowed to return home once a year and for some, they never returned home. They cut ties with their families in the rural reserves and started families in the cities. As the migrant labour system created economic opportunities for black men and served the interest of the white government, it left women in rural areas with the economic brunt of poverty, bearing the difficulties of taking care of their families and the resultant formation of large women headed-households. Their children bore the brunt of the migrant labour system, and their living conditions were not the most pleasant. Thus, many of them suffered from malnutrition and kwashiorkor while many died from these diseases.

Due to absent fathers and husbands, women were forced to be the sole providers in their homes. With the poverty level and health conditions of their children, most mothers were forced to seek waged jobs on the nearby farms as domestic workers to improve their living conditions. Women endured a matrix of dominance because of

their class, gender, and race. Women were viewed as inferior beings in society at large, and as a class, black women faced lower levels of education and fewer job opportunities. It is not surprising, then, that domestic service was the second largest employer of black women after agriculture. As they were excluded from economic participation, with the rise of the industrial economy due to the discovery of minerals and the growth of towns, black women were not considered in the mining industry not because of their race but because of their gender (Groenmeyer, 2011).

As a result of the migrant labour system, many households were headed by women and lived in poverty. The majority of women were unemployed as there were no opportunities for them in the reserves. This pattern is still evident in South Africa because about 43.1 percent of South African households are still headed by women (Statistics SA, GHS, 2018). The increasing number of female-headed households in South Africa today is a continuous phenomenon of apartheid oppression. Therefore, the current state of affairs in South Africa today cannot be ignored.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed research findings from the documentary *Last Grave at Dimbaza* using post-textual analysis and thematic analysis. Six themes emerged from the scenes in the documentary that highlighted the experiences of black families under the system of apartheid and the impact of the migrant labour system on black fatherhood, motherhood, and the experience of children under the racial capitalist system. This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the research findings. The next chapter presents and interprets data collected through archival media material on single female-headed households.



**CHAPTER 7**  
**POSTCOLONIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF FEMALE-HEADED**  
**HOUSEHOLD**

**(DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDING)**

**7.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and interprets data collected through archival media material on single motherhood. The data sources were online newspaper articles from *News24*, *IOL*, and *Timeslive* that focused on stories about single motherhood and absent fatherhood. The sampling criteria for these articles have been discussed in the preceding chapter.

**List of articles collected for analysis**

18 stories were selected as sources of data for this analysis. The table below shows the stories, the source of the story, title of the stories, location of stories, date, and authors.

Number	Date of story	Source of story	Title	Types of article	URL of story	Date accessed	Author
1	04 June 2018	Timeslive	The People's Bae on his absent dad: I told him God is the only father I know	Lifestyle	<a href="https://www.timeslive.co.za/tshisa-live/tshisa-live/2018-06-04-the-peoples-bae-on-his-absent-dad-i-told-him-god-is-the-only-father-i-know/">https://www.timeslive.co.za/tshisa-live/tshisa-live/2018-06-04-the-peoples-bae-on-his-absent-dad-i-told-him-god-is-the-only-father-i-know/</a>	08 August 2021	Kyle Zeeman
2	29 March 2018	Timeslive	Teen mothers are taking social	opinion	<a href="https://www.sowetanlive.co.z">https://www.sowetanlive.co.z</a>	08 August 2021	Reader Letter

			grants for themselves		<a href="#">a/opinion/letters/2018-03-29-teen-mothers--are-taking-social-grants--for-themselves/</a>		
3	17 June 2018	News24	When there are no fathers	Lifestyle	<a href="https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/when-there-are-no-fathers-20180617-2">https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/when-there-are-no-fathers-20180617-2</a>	08 August 2021	Zamayirha Peter
4	23 March 2018	News24	The damaged family structure in African societies is a result of a lack of land	Opinion	<a href="https://www.news24.com/citypress/voices/the-damaged-family-structure-in-african-societies-is-a-result-of-lack-of-land-2018032">https://www.news24.com/citypress/voices/the-damaged-family-structure-in-african-societies-is-a-result-of-lack-of-land-2018032</a>	08 August 2021	Yolanda Mhlungu
5	28 June 2018	IOL	The everyday struggles, and hardship faced by single parents	News	<a href="https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/the-everyday-struggles-hardship-faced-by-single-">https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/the-everyday-struggles-hardship-faced-by-single-</a>	08 August 2021	Brenda Masilela

					<a href="#">parents-15738079</a>		
6	13 July 2018	IOL	Our fathers, who art not pulling your weight ... it's time to man up	Lifestyle	<a href="https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/lifestyle/2018-07-13-our-fathers-who-art-not-pulling-your-weight--its-time-to-man-up/">https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/lifestyle/2018-07-13-our-fathers-who-art-not-pulling-your-weight--its-time-to-man-up/</a>	14 August 2021	Tannya Farber
7	29 April 2019	News24	Putting an end to the 'grant queen' fallacy	News	<a href="https://www.news24.com/news24/columnists/guestcolumn/putting-an-end-to-the-grant-queen-fallacy-20190428">https://www.news24.com/news24/columnists/guestcolumn/putting-an-end-to-the-grant-queen-fallacy-20190428</a>	08 August 2021	Mikhail Petersen
8	07 August 2019	News24	Black single fathers: a forgotten, but ever-present phenomenon	Opinion	<a href="https://www.news24.com/parent/Family/Parenting/black-single-fathers-a-forgotten-but-ever-present-phenomenon-20190802-2">https://www.news24.com/parent/Family/Parenting/black-single-fathers-a-forgotten-but-ever-present-phenomenon-20190802-2</a>	08 August 2021	Lesego Linda Plank and Portia Tsotetsi

9	13 May 2019	Timeslive	Musos sing praises of their moms	Lifestyle	<a href="https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/sundayworld/lifestyle/2019-05-13-musos-sing-praises-of-their-moms/">https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/sundayworld/lifestyle/2019-05-13-musos-sing-praises-of-their-moms/</a>	08 August 2021	Nokuthula Zwane
10	5 October 2019	IOL	Most children in SA have absent fathers, says survey	News	<a href="https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/most-children-in-sa-have-absent-fathers-says-survey-34066995">https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/most-children-in-sa-have-absent-fathers-says-survey-34066995</a>	14 August 2021	Lukhanyo Mtuta
11	4 April 2019	IOL	'He will only pay R500': Single moms reveal their daily struggles	News	<a href="https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/gauteng/he-will-only-pay-r500-single-moms-reveal-their-daily-struggles-20607471">https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/gauteng/he-will-only-pay-r500-single-moms-reveal-their-daily-struggles-20607471</a>	10 August 2021	Lindi Masinga
12	30 May 2019	Timeslive	Single women rising to the top, but are we robbing our future selves?	Business	<a href="https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/business/money/2019-05-30-single-women-rising-to-">https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/business/money/2019-05-30-single-women-rising-to-</a>	07 July 2021	Trudy Luthuli

					<a href="#">the-top-but-are-we-robbing-our-future-selves/</a>		
13	24 April 2020	Timeslive	Supermarkets in Covid-19 lockdown   Single moms told, 'leave your child outside'	News	<a href="https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2020-04-24-supermarkets-in-covid-19-lockdown-single-moms-told-leave-your-child-outside/">https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2020-04-24-supermarkets-in-covid-19-lockdown-single-moms-told-leave-your-child-outside/</a>	10 August 2021	Wendy Knowler
14	03 May 2020	Timeslive	WATCH   Lerato Mvelase clears the air: I celebrate all single moms - with or without degrees	News	<a href="https://www.timeslive.co.za/tshisa-live/tshisa-live/2020-05-03-watch--lerato-mvelase-clears-the-air-i-celebrate-all-single-moms-with-or-without-degree">https://www.timeslive.co.za/tshisa-live/tshisa-live/2020-05-03-watch--lerato-mvelase-clears-the-air-i-celebrate-all-single-moms-with-or-without-degree</a>	10 August 2021	Nonhlanhla Msibi
15	06 July 2020	News24	Heartlines study on fatherhood in	News	<a href="https://www.heartlines.org.za/father">https://www.heartlines.org.za/father</a>	10 August 2021	Elizabeth Mamacos

			South Africa: 'It's complicated		<a href="#">S-matter/medial/heartlines-study-on-fatherhood-in-south-africa-its-complicated</a>		
16	30 January 2020	News24	The challenges are magnified': A single parent's survival guide	News	<a href="https://www.news24.com/parent/family/parenting/a-single-parents-survival-guide-20191203">https://www.news24.com/parent/family/parenting/a-single-parents-survival-guide-20191203</a>	14 August 2021	Parent24
17	27 August 2020	IOL	Financial resilience of SA single moms under pressure due to Covid-19	Personal finance	<a href="https://www.iol.co.za/personal-finance/columnists/financial-resilience-of-sa-single-moms-under-pressure-due-to-covid-19-c7657159-6e40-4cdb-83bf-c238d4ab81e8">https://www.iol.co.za/personal-finance/columnists/financial-resilience-of-sa-single-moms-under-pressure-due-to-covid-19-c7657159-6e40-4cdb-83bf-c238d4ab81e8</a>	10 August 2021	Via Nappy.co
18	02 August 2020	IOL	Beneath single mothers' hard work	News	<a href="https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/news/">https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/news/</a>	27 July 2021	Amanda Maliba

			lies deep-seated pain, says ex-journo in a new book		<a href="#">beneath-single-mothers-hard-work-lies-deep-seated-pain-says-ex-journo-in-new-book-3d003942-99d7-4619-86c5-1c23ca1f9757</a>		
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Table 7.1 Articles retained for analysis

## 7.2 Research Findings

Themes and sub-themes emerged from the deductive thematic analysis of these stories. After analyzing all the stories, various themes emerged that described the framing of media discourse of single female-headed households within the postcolonial conditions in South Africa.

### **Acknowledgment of single mothers' resilience**

Single mothers encounter hardships in heading households and childbearing. However, media discourse on single mothers neglects the resilience that these mothers have shown over the years. These mothers are determined not to be crushed by the challenges of raising children alone, heading households, poverty and unemployment, hence they show resilience throughout the hardships they encounter. The analysis of the stories shows that there is a pattern of telling stories about motherhood in a way that single mothers' resilience is neglected. For example, in article 11 the author writes “single mothers who receive no help from their baby fathers are forced to take multiple low-paying jobs just to stay afloat”.

This finding corroborates those of Raniga and Ncobos (2014) whose participants indicated that they started their businesses to support themselves and their families to

supplement the meager income provided by the government child support grant. These findings form part of the core elements of postcolonial feminism that challenge the ideology that has belittled the status of women and acknowledge that single women in post-colonial South Africa are independent and economically empowered to inspire their children to achieve more in life despite any challenges.

South African single mothers have thus far done a great job in heading families and childbearing through their resilience. For instance, in article 12 the author writes:

“Women-headed households in South Africa have increased over the years, and that has created a dual role where a woman is both the nurturer and provider. It is not surprising to see more women are buying homes as a way of creating long-term wealth or leaving a legacy for their children and/or loved ones.”

Single-mother households in South Africa have increased over the years, and these households had found positive adjustments to overcome the challenges that they encounter and remain resilient throughout. The media article 17 acknowledges this. The author writes: “Single mothers already show remarkable resilience in so many aspects of their lives. They juggle parenting with a career or business and running their household. With the uncertainty of the 2020 school year, many had to take on the role of homeschooling too.”

This article is about the financial resilience of South African single mothers under pressure due to Covid19, the non-linguistic context used in this article highlights how single mothers managed to overcome the impact associated with the Covid19 pandemic through their resilience. This finding corroborates those of Mabelane, Makofane, and Kgadima (2019) whose participants expressed that their mothers lived according to the African proverb that says “*Mosadi o swara thipa ka mogaleng*”: “a mother holds the sharpest part (blade) of a knife” –which meaning that mothers will do everything within their powers to care for their children and their families.

The finding above relates to the work of Arlie Hochschild titled *‘The Second Shift’* (1989), which highlights the double burden of women as they have to work in the formal sector and also engage in unpaid domestic work at home. This finding shows how women are faced with domestic responsibilities and childbearing with no help as



there is no male figure in the house to share the responsibilities with. Hence, they developed a sense of resilience.

This finding highlights that single mothers experience what Hochschild (1989) refers to as the double burden of femininity, yet they can reach for their goals and create a legacy for their children. This shows that single mothers work hard to secure a greater future for their families but get no recognition for their resilience. Hence African feminists in post-colonial theory emphasize that black women in the post-colonial era in South African societies should not be viewed only as victims of colonialism and apartheid but rather be celebrated for empowering themselves, solo child-bearing, and taking care of themselves in the patriarchal culture where women are meant to be invisible.

### **The preference for Western traditional heteronormative family structure**

The African family structure has gone through massive transitions during the colonial and apartheid days. During pre-colonial times, the Bantu family structure was patriarchal, patrilocal, patrilineal, and polygamous consisting of a range of relative members connected through the father lineage. The family was considered important in African society, hence marriage patterns and types encouraged family growth. However, the African family values and structure were broken down by Europeans who preferred a traditional family structure as they believed that a family unit should be in a traditional form that comprised of a mother, father, and children without relative members. To achieve their cultural ideology, Europeans put in place laws that shaped African families into European traditional structures and thus destroyed the extended family structure.

The European ideology and cultural supremacy continue to define the African family structure and preference through media. The analysis of the stories shows that there is a pattern of telling stories about motherhood in a way that highlights a preference for this traditional family structure. For instance, in article 9 the author states that:

“There are so many influences in a child’s life from drug abuse to gangsterism. With all these influences, it could be great for a father to step up. Children go through various stages in their lives and the need for both parents is essential.

This sentiment does not downplay the work of single-parent mothers but it is rather a cry for a traditional family.”

These findings confirm Amato’s (2010) assertion that the involvement of both parents in the child’s development is important for the child’s upbringing outcomes. The media framing in the above finding portrays single-mother households as having deficits in the family structure as the traditional family is normalized and is the benchmark for measuring other family forms through the deconstruction of language used in these news articles. As a result, this media discourse turns a blind eye to the changing family structure in South Africa as it evolved from the extended household, nuclear household, and single mother household. The colonial and apartheid cultural colonisation of black people influenced the preference for traditional family structure through laws and policies that destroyed the African family unit. For instance, the Urban Area Acts of 1945 and housing policy promoted single-family houses of 3 to 4 rooms to accommodate nuclear families in urban areas to prevent the formation of extended families. The acts, therefore, encouraged the transition of African extended family units to a more nuclear form (Welsh, 2009). African societies still bear the scar of the painful transition of their family structure and values as European ideologies and preferences persist after 28 years of democracy in post-colonial South Africa.

### ***Scapegoating, stereotyping, and neglect of positive outcomes in female-headed households***

Female-headed households in South Africa have increased over the decades due to various factors. However, media discourse rarely acknowledges the great work that single mothers do in heading households and raising children. Rather, female-headed households are viewed as the source of various social problems that children encounter. For instance, in article 16, the author wrote that “Children without involved fathers or significantly older male fathers figure are at risk of both perpetrating and becoming victims of violence, both as children and adults, and of becoming victims of substance abuse; teen pregnancy; poor academic achievement; mental health problems, and delinquency.”

These findings support East, Jackson, and O’Brien’s (2007) assertion that children from female-headed families are associated with failure, crime, poor academic performance, economic support, and behavioural issues. Conversely, in an attempt to

dispel the negative narrative outcome of children raised in single-mother households, Kulukjian and Pagan (2015) argue that mothers provide affirmation and express exceptionalism to their children and establish another family system other than the nuclear family system to achieve strength and thrive for successful outcomes of their children. Thus, some children raised by single mothers succeed beyond all barriers. There is a need to therefore escape the idea that a single household structure is incapable of raising children as compared to the traditional family structure.

Whilst single mothers are striving to empower themselves, media discourse around women who empower themselves is rarely celebrated without making them feel like they are neglecting their roles as mothers. For instance, in article 12, the author wrote that:

“A recent study done by research group Lightstone shows that in 2017 and 2018, single women bought the most properties compared with single men and married couples. This reflects trends in the global economy where women are marrying late, the rush to become a wife and mother to 2.5 children has died down. Women are striving for academic, and post-matric excellence, of which the demands of studying cannot be understated. The rise and growth of the ‘career woman’ continue long hours and high-stress pressures result in a delay in committing to marriage and/or motherhood.”

The above finding is in line with the seminal assertion of de Beauvoir (1949) that women were made to believe that they have an eternal feminine nature which struck as another form of oppression. The language used is indirectly telling women that they are better off in their eternal feminine, kept away from the men’s concerns such as work, power, and career. Furthermore, this means that women should focus on motherhood, femininity, and being erotic objects instead of politics or anything else outside the home and family (Simone de Beauvoir, 1949).

### **Social grant dependency and abuse of state’s resources**

The concept of single motherhood in the media is rooted around unsustainability, dependency culture, social security, irrational motivation, irresponsibility, and often the object of negative viewpoint. For example, in article 2 the author wrote:

“Today we live in the era where many young mothers receive social grant money on behalf of their children but use it for their personal needs to buy weaves and beauty products. Social grants encourage laziness and dependency on the government, also motivating teen pregnancy where many teen mothers drop out of school and use grant money on alcohol and parties.”

Potts (2012) asserts that grant recipients use the money for their benefit rather than the basic needs of children. In a similar vein, these findings corroborate that of Coe (2011) on the subjectivity of single mothers by the Australian media that constructed single mothers as lazy human beings, who developed the dependency culture with irrational motivation. Furthermore, the findings support the unscripted statement made by a South African former minister of finance Malusi Gigaba who referred to CSG as “*imail yegolo*” which mean ‘back money’—that can be interpreted to imply that women lie on their back to fall pregnant to access the grant (Sibanda-Moyo, 2018). Conversely, in an attempt to dispel the negative narrative that women get pregnant to receive the social grant, Naong (2011) observed that other factors that contribute to pregnancy include substance abuse and poverty. However, there is no evidence to support the claim that the fertility rate and CSG access are related. This suggests that single mothers who receive a social grant are exploitative and irresponsible. For instance, in article 7 the author expressed that “There is the archetypal black woman who uses government aid and grant to support her lavish life, she is too lazy to find a job”.

The framing of social grant recipients reinforces a vivid picture of Black single mothers who receive social grants as irresponsible. Hence, the emotion of belittling them while omitting other ways they use the grants that could suggest a different sentiment as opposed to the framed one. This could justify why African feminists in post-colonial theory address the intersectional oppression of gender, race, and class aiming to address oppression in all systems that create inequality and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989).

For example, the above findings highlight how black women are still victims matrix of domination and intersectional oppression in post-colonial South Africa. Black women faced dual discrimination based on race, socioeconomic status, and gender creating conditions for them to be viewed as irresponsible beings that exploit the government’s

money to maintain their lifestyles. This supports Hooks' assertion in her book *'Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism'* that black women's experience as victims of multiple oppression has given them a unique perspective in society.

Probably this intersectionality is a result of the marginalization of black women during colonial days when women were not allowed to participate in the job market and were only allowed to work as domestic workers. Additionally, the rate of unemployment amongst black women as compared to other races in the postcolonial era might be the influence as there is no mention of other racial groups in this text. Furthermore, the meaning drawn from this text places black women as social grant burdens and economic threats and invisible in the job market, reflecting on power relations, postcolonial conditions, and social inequalities. The construction of single mothers establishes a strong link between CSG and by default irresponsibility. As a result, a single mother is typically considered a CSG recipient, an irresponsible person who puts the economy at risk by draining public resources. For example, Hunter (2007: 7) claims that "giving single parents financial support to stay at home could destroy the incentive to work".

### **Intergenerational Father Absence**

Another theme that emerges from the analysis of the story is the pattern of a generational trend of absent fatherhood. South Africa's current state of fatherhood is heavily influenced by the country's history of socio-economic inequalities and the system of oppression implemented by Europeans.

#### *The effects of absent fathers on children*

Children living without their fathers lack the experience of a father role model, a sense of security, and identity. Thus, they feel illegitimate and experience feelings of inadequacy, rejection, abandonment, and develop feelings of anger towards the absent father that may then be projected into other areas of their lives. These sentiments were also observed in article 11.

The analysis of the stories shows that there is a pattern of telling stories about fatherhood that highlights the effect of absent fathers on children. This appears to be a pattern of intergenerational absence of fatherhood that was birthed in South Africa by the system of colonialism and apartheid, hence children are now affected by the

legacy of colonialism and apartheid. The separation of fathers from their families in the rural areas was a painful experience that those who were wounded by it still bear the pain it cost.

Absent fatherhood does not only pose challenges for mothers. It is also associated with wide-ranging effects on the child's life. For example, in article 11 the author writes:

“Boys may have low self-esteem and may struggle with feelings of not having a male figure to model what being a man is. Boys may also struggle with emotional intimacy in adulthood as they would not have an emotional bond with their father or would have seen what a healthy relationship (between their mother and father) looks like. Girls may have the following relationship difficulties; seek a father figure in a romantic relationship which may result in them being in sexual and emotional exploitive relationships with older men. Finding it difficult to be in a fulfilling relationship because they are seeking a father figure and replacing their romantic partner.”

This finding is similar to the ones of Makofane (2015) that based on the experiences of African women from families where the fathers are absent, lack of cultural rituals by the paternal family due to being raised by mothers with a father absence may lead to misfortune, behavioral problems, and cultural conflict. It is important to note that a lack of cultural belonging often leads to a dearth of a strong sense of identity and difficulties in information and maintaining relationships.

Further in article 10, the author highlights the outcomes of children who grow up without fathers. For example, the author indicated that “Absent father is a big issue, we see that in cases of child maintenance and also there are so many influences in child's life from drug abuse to gangsterism with all these influences, it would be great for fathers to step up”.

This finding highlights how media discourse reports the outcomes of children living in single-mother households, only focusing on the negative side of the outcome, and thus influencing people's understanding and perspective of children who live without their fathers. This supports McQuail's (1994) assertion that the media has significant effects in that, while it may not always be successful in telling people what to think, it is spectacularly successful in telling people what to think about.

### ***Colonial-apartheid destruction of a black family and generational absence of fatherhood***

Before the arrival of Europeans in African society, family played a significant role in social organisation. The family was the largest social unit which was formed by marriage between a man and his wife, children, and other relative members of the family. The families were patriarchal, patrilocal, patrilineal, and polygamous. Patriarchal families include newly married sons living with their parents under the authority of the head of the house, this type of homestead was a function of culture (Oppong, 1997). However, that was destroyed by the system of colonialism and apartheid that took away not only their land but also their family values, customs, and culture through the matrix of oppression.

The analysis of all the stories shows there is a pattern of telling stories about the female-headed households in a way that highlights the destruction of the African family structure by colonial acts. The introduction of the 1913 Native Land Act did not only cause enormous suffering and poverty to African people but eroded family values among African people. For instance, in article 4 the author states that:

“The 1913 Native Land Act not only caused enormous suffering and poverty to African people but also eroded family values among the African people. It directly gave birth to the migrant labour system which saw a geographic disruption in African families. The migrant labour system resulted in fatherless homes as fathers were in the city working in low-paying jobs and only returning home once a year.”

“The architects of apartheid made sure taverns were easily accessible to these migrant workers. This resulted in these men spending all their money in those taverns as a way of de-stressing because of the frustrating and appalling conditions they worked in rather than sending money home. Fast forward a hundred years since the implementation of the Land Act: In 2013 the South African Institute of Race Relations revealed that only 33% of children in South Africa live with both parents. A large percentage of these children are raised by single mothers and are most likely to be poor and black.”

The Natives Land Act of 1913 limited African ownership of land and houses in urban areas. Such laws made it impossible for African families to travel as a family unit to the urban industrial zone of the migrant laborer (Gelderblom & Kok, 1994). This finding relates to O’Laughlin’s (1998:5-6) argument that the diminishing of African families’ decision powers resulted in families not having any other option than to remain in the rural reserves as the government set laws that controlled the movement of African people.

Due to a lack of socio-economic opportunities, the majority of African fathers were forced to enter into the migrant labour system which forced men to leave their families to work in mines in the city and live in single-sex hostels. The working conditions at the mines limited the experience of black fatherhood as men were only allowed to spend at least a month annually with their family back at home while others never went back home and lost connection with their families (Morrell & Richter, 2006). In article 3 the author tried to highlight the current absent fatherhood phenomenon by stating that:

“South Africa has a long way history of colonial and apartheid migrant labour, which separated men from their families. With the increasing urbanization, many fathers still work away from their family homes, sending remittances and visiting only occasionally.”

After years of post-colonialism, fathers are still the missing link in their families. They are absent in their children’s lives because of the working conditions. This is to show that the culture of colonialism exists in South Africa. The dominant ideology of colonialism is continuously influencing the nature of fatherhood. This supports Said’s (1993) assertion of post-colonialism that the experiences of colonialism continue into the present.

The finding confirms Padi, Nduna, Khunou & Kholopane’s (2014) argument that the father's absence persists in post-apartheid despite two decades since the end of apartheid in South Africa. The pattern of absent fatherhood in South Africa is transmitted from one generation to another. For example, in article 4 the author wrote that:

“A damaged family structure leaves millions of children who grow up to be men and women with no sense of belonging. Now they are parents themselves but



since they lacked role models when they were growing up they do not understand their roles in the family.”

This finding confirms Serbin and Karp’s (2003) assertion that the father’s fathering behaviour in one generation may be linked to the son’s fathering behaviour in the next generation. Furthermore, Lesejane (2006) highlights that in patriarchal African families sons are taught to inherit the father’s fatherhood patterns and leadership skills. Thus, the intergenerational transmission of the father’s role is passed from one generation to another. When the father is absent, he leaves a trait of absence that his son also inherits. Therefore, it is not surprising that the pattern of father absence still exists in post-colonial South Africa. It is evident that the minds of the colonized are still built from the bourgeois colonialist environment and absent fatherhood is the legacy of colonialism as it is inherited from the colonial background.

The findings are consistent with those of Smit (2001) that revealed that marital and family fragmentation and breakdown, insecurity, conjugal infidelity, and parental absenteeism were faced by African people participating in the migrant labour system. Moreover, this confirms Rabe’s (2006) claim that African family life was fractured as the state systematically held the power to decide where Africans resided, with who, and under which state. Many fathers were forced to live without their families and that resulted in the strain of the separation that caused many men to break ties with their rural families and start new lives in the cities.

Furthermore, the findings show that the subsequent post-colonial form presents distinct characteristics from those found under the colonial jurisdiction while access to land by black South Africans remains a controversial topic. Moreover, for Black South Africans, the idea of post-colonial experience could be viewed as a premature celebratory ideology because colonial dominance, power, and socio-economic inequalities still shape African family structures. Hence, Africans continue to live up to the colonial and apartheid legacies despite decades after colonialism and apartheid.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

The five themes that emerged from the data collected from media archives (newspaper articles) are the acknowledgment of single mother resilience, the reference for western traditional heteronormative family structure, scapegoating,

stereotyping and neglect of positive outcomes of female-headed households, social grant dependency, abuse of state's resources and intergenerational father absence. Regarding the western traditional heteronormative family structure, the findings have shown that the African family structure is still under colonial domination and the media address the preferred family structure as being heteronormative. Hence the emerged female-headed households are benchmarked against a narrative and perpetuation of the heteronormative family structure. With the majority of household in South Africa being female-headed, the media discourse fail to acknowledge this type of family structure as an emerging new form of family. Instead, the media cast a negative normative narrative of a deviation from the norm. Also, the data for this study neglect the role that state intervention through Child Social Grant plays in assisting single mothers to financially support their children and alleviate the poverty that exists in some single-mother households. Instead, the media discourse tends to perpetuate a normative negative and global trend of stereotyping mothers who receive social grants by casting them as exploiters of state resources who misappropriate the money to meet their personal needs. The media considers women as social burdens to the state finances and as major contributors to the country's economic threats. However, the findings revealed the resilience that single mothers portray in empowering themselves and their families despite all the challenges and oppression they face.

The culture of absent fatherhood was traced back to colonial and apartheid days and it has been shown how the past can influence the present. Children that grow up without fathers may internalize this supposed norm and also become absent fathers. In doing so, this would be a continuity of the legacies and scars of colonialism and the apartheid migrant labour system that historically gave rise to absent fatherhood.

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the research findings. These findings were able to meet the objectives of the study. The next chapter concludes this research and discusses the implications and importance of this study, and summarises the whole research while offering recommendations.

## CHAPTER 8

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

#### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the entire research study and discusses the recommendations, research design, and methodology that were used. This chapter contains a discussion of the study's contribution as well as its limitations. The chapter concludes with recommendations and suggestions.

#### 8.2 Summary and discussion of the research

Qualitative methodology was used in this study to achieve the desired research objectives. I used qualitative methodology because it provided a greater and in-depth understanding of media discourse on female-headed households and absent fatherhood with a critical analysis of historical media construction of a black family structure. This methodology offered discursive data than a static analysis specifically for the research objectives of this study. To recall, the objectives of this study were:

- To analyze the media discourses of single motherhood in South Africa.
- To explore if women's resilience in matrifocal families forms part of media discourses about single-mother households.
- To analyze the effects of colonialism and apartheid on black family structure and their consequences in South Africa today.

To address these objectives, two forms of archival media materials were used as sources of data. The first was a historical documentary film that has shown the media construction of absent fatherhood in South Africa during the apartheid era. The film entitled '*Last Grave at Dimbaza*' provides the historical context of media construction of black families and also explained the bantustans/homeland system, job reservations, and influx control through pass laws. Moreover, it compared the white families' lifestyle to that of Black South African families under apartheid.

For a post-apartheid media construction of absent fatherhood and single-mother household, I selected three online newspapers, namely; *IOL*, *TimesLive*, and *News24* for stories about single-motherhood and absent fatherhood. These three online

newspapers have the largest readership in South Africa, according to the South African Readership Statistics for online news (MyBroadband, 2020).

The findings from the analyzed data were presented in Chapters 6 and 7 of this research thesis and are summarised and discussed below concerning each of the research objectives:

### **8.3 The media discourse of single motherhood in South Africa**

The analysis of the data shows that the African family structure is still under colonial ideology and the media discourses preferred a heteronormative family structure. Hence the emerged female-headed households are benchmarked against a narrative and perpetuation of the heteronormative family structure. The reading of the film '*Last Grave at Dimbaza*' shows a narrative of single mothers as powerless and victims of apartheid with a lack of agency. For instance, the narrator highlighted in scene 1 that "For the other 11 months, their wives in the Bantustans can do nothing except wait, for news and money from them". This reveals that women could not do anything for themselves, although poor and marginalized women in those conditions strived to sustain their children in the absence of a father.

Female-headed households in South Africa have increased over the decades due to a variety of factors. However, media discourse rarely acknowledges the important work that single mothers do in leading households and raising children. The findings from the newspaper stories reveal that media discourse on female-headed households paints single mothers' families as the source of a variety of social problems that children encounter. Children raised in single-mother households are associated with poor academic achievement, crime, mental health problems, and delinquency. These findings are also in line with literature that engages children living in a single-mother household. Literature tends to engage single-mother households from a standpoint of family deficit which views single-mother families as disrupted and broke. According to some literature, failure, crime, poor academic performance, economic support, health, lower cognitive attainment, and behavioural issues are all associated with children from single-mother families (East, Jackson & O'Brien, 2007: 14; McLanahan, Tach & Scheider, 2013: 340; Amato, Patterson & Beattiec, 2015: 191).

Media discourse on single mothers who empower themselves and raise their children is rarely celebrated without stereotyping them and making them feel like they are neglecting their roles as mothers. Fessler (2017) asserts that in the media, single mothers are almost always portrayed as poor and struggling women on welfare / social grants with misbehaving children who are at high risk for a variety of very negative traits.

The construction of single mothers establishes a strong link between Child Support Grant (CSG) and, by default, irresponsibility. Thus, a single mother is commonly regarded as CSG dependent, irresponsible, and a danger to the economy who drains public resources. The findings from the newspaper stories revealed that media discourse tends to perpetuate a normative negative and global trend of stereotyping mothers who receive social grants, portraying them as misappropriators of state resources who misappropriate the money to meet their personal needs and as social burdens on the state finances who contribute to the country's economic risks. These findings corroborate that of Coe (2011) on the subjectivity of single mothers by the Australian media that constructed single mothers as lazy human beings who developed the dependency culture with irrational motivation.

Furthermore, the findings of this study support the unscripted statement made by a South African former Minister of Finance, Malusi Gigaba, who referred to CSG as "*imail yegolo*" which means 'back money'. This can be interpreted to imply that women lie on their backs to fall pregnant to access the grant (Sibanda-Moyo, 2018). Media framing of social grant recipients reinforces a vivid picture of a black single mother as a person who collects social grants without any irresponsibility. Thus, the emotion of belittling women and labeling them while omitting other ways they use the grant could suggest a different sentiment as opposed to the framed one.

Single mothers are placed as social grant burdens and economic threats and invisible in the job market, reflecting on power relations, postcolonial conditions, and social inequalities. Single mothers still experience the intersection of gender and social relations. Hence, post-colonial theory aims to address women's issues and problems and how they are experienced differently by women to challenge the ideology that has belittled the status of women (Riyal, 2019). Media discourse needs to recognize the role that child social grants play in assisting single mothers to financially support their

children. This state intervention helps to alleviate poverty in some single-mother households and the country as a whole. More importantly, the media need to highlight the agency, strength, and capabilities of many single mothers in raising successful children and discontinue to ply negative stereotypes.

### **Do women's resilience in matrifocal families form part of media discourse about single-motherhood?**

The study explored if women's resilience in matrifocal families forms part of the media discourse about single motherhood. The findings of this study show that women's resilience is not part of the large media discourse of single-mother households in South African selected media stories. In engaging this objective the following themes emerged from the collected data: erasure of women's resilience and minimal acknowledgment of single mothers' resilience. To explore women's resilience in media discourse, the study traced the media construction of black families and the experience of motherhood during the apartheid period. The findings from the film '*Last Grave in Dimbaza*' portrayed women as victims of apartheid without any agency and with men away in the cities, women were left in the homelands with no work opportunities. The study found that women had to come up with ways to survive or feed their families while waiting for their husbands to send money, However, the documentary did not portray how women in the Bantustans survived under the migrant labour and apartheid laws and policies.

Women's resilience and sacrifices in the matrifocal bantustans were not discussed in the scenes. Thus, women were portrayed as passive agents of the apartheid struggle. The documentary placed focus on racial capitalism and compared the white lifestyle to that of blacks. It further discussed the wage gap between black and white workers as well as how foreign investors have benefited greatly from the government's policies. Hence the core elements of post-colonial feminism theory are: recognizing the experiences of women, not only as victims of colonial oppression but, as active agents in the struggle against it, and response to colonialism and its legacies on women (Oyewumi, 2003).

The post-colonial media discourse on single-motherhood in the analyzed data revealed minimal acknowledgment of women's resilience with only three stories from the eighteen stories having discoursed the single-mothers resilience. The three stories

discussed the burdens that single mothers encounter and their ability to develop survival mechanisms to overcome the burdens. The stories revealed that single mothers have the financial and childcare burden but they manage to develop a sense of resilience. This indicates that women go through challenges of being solo providers, the sole provider of household responsibilities in many cases, and sole childcaring providers in current post-colonial South Africa. These findings contextualize Hochschild's (1989) theory of the second shift which emphasised women's double burden of working in the formal sector while also performing unpaid domestic work at home. This, therefore, demonstrates how women develop a sense of resilience when they are faced with domestic responsibilities and childbearing without a male figure in the house to share the responsibilities with.

Their resilience is supported by the African proverb that says '*Mosadi o swara thipa ka mogaleng*'; "a mother holds the sharpest part (blade) of a knife". This means that mothers will do everything within their powers to care for their children and their families (Makofane & Kgadima, 2019). This resilience is generally not acknowledged in framing single mother households. In South Africa, it is important to acknowledge and celebrate the resilience that has been shown by single mothers for decades in heading households. In many households, women face countless challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and lack of support, but they still ensure that their children do not get affected by their struggles—hence they develop a sense of resilience.

### **The effects of colonialism and apartheid on black family structure and their consequences in South Africa**

The apartheid government introduced the migrant labour system to grow the white economy and to achieve their goals. The then government forced men into the labour migrant system and broke family ties. In African society, family played a significant role in social organisation. Thus, the breakage of the black family structure was essential to the success of the white economy but disastrous for the black family with an effect spanning generations. In essence, the wealth of white South Africa was built on the destruction of black families. This is poignantly captured in the documentary, it shows how men were racially oppressed under the apartheid system. The condition of the migrant labour system forced black men to sell their labour and live in single-sex overcrowded barracks without any form of social services, exposed to harsh

conditions, dehumanized, and reduced to mere producers of manual labour for the benefit of mine corporations, British colonialists and white economy (Breckenridge, 1998).

The analysis of the film shows that the apartheid government was committed to destroying the black family structure by separating men from their families and placing them in a single-sex hostel where women and children were not allowed to visit, and men can only go home once a year. Black fathers have been robbed of the opportunity to raise their children by the migrant labour system and other laws that restricted families from staying together.

While other men started new families in the city and cut ties with their families in the bantustans, their children grew up without their fathers and their wives were forced to head households. Fatherless children lived in critical conditions because of inadequate health resources resulting in many deaths of children. All these were captured in the '*Last Grave at Dimbaza*'—which provides a snapshot of life for Black South Africans during the apartheid era.

With reference to post-colonial theory, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989: 2) state that “Colonialism is not erased, rather is a continuity of preoccupation throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression”. The black family structure in South Africa today is heavily influenced by the country's history of socio-economic inequalities and the system of oppression while the pattern of absent fatherhood is continuing in post-colonial South Africa. The wounded still bear the scar, the father's absence in the black society persists and this pattern is transmitted from one generation to the other. When the father is absent, he leaves a trait absence that his son also inherits. The finding affirms Padi, Nduna, Khunou, and Kholopane's (2014) claim that the father's absence persists in post-apartheid South Africa after apartheid ended in 1994. In South Africa, the pattern of absent fatherhood is passed down from generation to generation.

Black families are still built from the bourgeois colonialist environment in which absent fatherhood and female-headed households are the legacies of colonialism as inherited from the colonial background. The current black family structure is the legacy of



colonialism and apartheid, and the goal for black families is to recover from the colonial and apartheid destruction of the family structure.

### **8.3 Contribution of the Research**

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in the area of gender and communication, media discourse, media framing, and postcolonial analysis of communication. The study also contributes to knowledge about African family structure and the current state of absent fatherhood and female-headed households as it engages with absent masculinity and feminine resilience through a post-colonial media discourse lens and existing literature on the topic of female-headed households and absent fatherhood. Most importantly, the study refocuses attention on the need to celebrate single mothers who go through various struggles to raise their children. It confronts the victim narratives about single mothers and redirects attention to their strength, sacrifice, and resilience. The study also restores the agency of single mothers, who in media discourses are boxed into a victim and stereotypical narratives.

The current study adds knowledge to the existing literature because it focuses on the media discourse on female-headed households from online newspaper articles which were collected from *News24*, *TimeLives*, and *IOL* publications that to the best of the researcher's knowledge were not studied previously. The media play a big role in shaping society's view on social issues. To understand the current absent-masculinity and highlight feminine resilience in South Africa, the study traced the country's history and the entanglement it has in shaping the modern South African family structure, from the pre-colonial period, colonial era, and apartheid period to understand the current family structure and how it is presented in the media. Thus, situating the understanding of the current single-mother household within the historical context of pre-colonial African life, the impact of colonialism, and the destruction of a black family during the apartheid era is essentially significant. The documentary '*Last Grave at Dimbaza*' served as a historical example of media construction of black families showing the experience of single motherhood and absent fatherhood during apartheid. This enables society to see everything with complete clarity and to understand the effects of black family structure and their consequences in South Africa today.

#### **8.4 Limitations of the study**

The study used a qualitative approach. Therefore, this approach is concerned with a qualitative study of the phenomenon relating to or involving quality. “Rather than numbers and statistics, the qualitative approach is interested in analyzing subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardized data and analyzing texts and images” (Flicks, 2014: 542). The subjective nature of data collection and data analysis in qualitative research is another limitation of this approach.

Qualitative research is often not representative of the general population because of the limited sample, which raises issues of generalizability of the whole population of the research. The study used purposive sampling –the limitation of which is that the researcher is subjective and biased in choosing the subjects of the study.

##### ***Limitations of data***

The archival materials which include three South African online newspaper publications, *News24*, *TimesLive*, and *IOL* were purposively chosen for this study because they have the highest readership in South Africa. However, there are many online newspapers in South Africa, therefore, the three selected newspaper publications do not represent all the online newspaper publications. Moreover, the online newspapers may not be representative of all print media as they are published in the English language and their other newspapers the researcher could have analyzed that are written in other languages among the 11 official languages in South Africa.

Data from the online publication were collected from January 2018 to December 2020 (three years). This may lead to the time frame being a limitation in that for a phenomenon that spans decades, the researcher has limited data to only three years. Thus, although the findings in the analyzed news sources suffice for the current level of research they were also limiting.

The documentary film ‘*Last Grave at Dimbaza*’ was purposively chosen because; it explains the bantustans or homeland system, the different lives of Black and white people, the experience of black people, and black family life under apartheid as well as the effect of the migrant worker. Although numerous films document Black lives

during apartheid, limiting historical media construction of absent fatherhood to one documentary film is limiting, albeit it suffices for the current level of research qualification.

### ***Limitations of semiotic textual analysis and thematic analysis***

These methods of analysis rely on individual and personal opinions and views to comprehend experiences, thoughts, or behaviour patterns across the newspaper texts and the documentary. The analysis does not reveal the author's intention, the interpretations are not fixed in the text, it does not unveil how the text was received or understood by its audience, and it also favors 'academic readers' of texts. The interpretations of the texts from the documentary and newspaper articles reflect the researcher's interpretation. The interpretations may therefore not reflect how the audience received the text nor reveal the intention of the author in the text.

### ***Limitations due to Covid19***

The Covid19 pandemic presented a global distraction to many academic activities. Due to the Covid19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, there were no face-to-face interactions with supervisors. Although we used online tools such as video calls and emails, the cost of internet data was a limiting factor to the regular use of technology. Due to covid-19 restrictions, I could not access print copies of literature material (books) at the university library. I was therefore limited to using e-books and the challenge was other books were not available in soft copies. Moreover, I could not meet with other master's students to share ideas, suggestions, and advice.

## **8.5 Recommendation**

### ***8.5.1. Recommendation for future research***

a. For future research, a mixed-method approach can be used and the study's findings can be both subjective and objective to reduce potential bias.

b. To avoid the limitations of semiotic and thematic textual analysis, the researcher could include the author's intention for the media text as well as the interpretations of the media text's audiences. This can help to reduce the possibility of bias in the findings.

c. To reduce bias, different data methods can be explored in future studies, as well as random sampling. Focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and qualitative surveys can be used to reduce bias, increase the standardization of findings, and include a larger sample of the population. This would improve the finding's generalisability.

### **8.5.2. Recommendation for society**

The findings discovered that the media discourse of female-headed households tends to ignore issues of gender-based violence, gender inequality, and the unemployment rate amongst women in South Africa. Also, the media discourse lacks focus on the economic issues that may contribute to absent fatherhood. For instance, high unemployment in the country and possibly some aspects of the traditional African culture may indirectly contribute to the absenteeism of fathers, for example, paying lobola, or paying damages after getting a woman pregnant. These are the aspects that media discourse should also focus on when discussing female headed-households and absent masculinity in South Africa. Society needs to understand factors that contribute to the current father-absence and female-headed households. Therefore, the media publication should educate society about the history of the black family structure and how it has transitioned over the decades because it is important to know the past as it shapes the present and the future.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

This study was set out to: investigate the post-colonial analysis of media discourses of female-headed households in South Africa; explore if women's resilience in matrifocal families forms part of media discourses about single-mother households; analyze the effects of colonialism and apartheid on black family structure and their consequences in South Africa today. This study traced the African family structure from the pre-colonial period to gain an understanding of how the African family structure had changed over the decades. The literature revealed that the Black population in South Africa belongs to the Southern Bantu society and consists of several tribes; the Nguni tribe consisting of the Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, and Swazi, the Sotho tribe consisting of the Southern Sotho, Western Sotho and Northern Sotho, the Venda, and the Shangana Tsonga. In Bantu society, the family played a very significant role in social organisation, the family was the largest social unit which was formed by a marriage between a man and his wife, children, and other relative

members of the family. The Bantu society valued family and marriage. However, that changed due to colonialism and the discoveries of gold and diamond that led to the mining industries which brought about social and economic transformational changes.

These changes were in a form of industrialization, law measures, and land expropriation that changed the African family structure from an extended unit to a nuclear unit. The introduction of the migrant labour system separated husbands from their wives and families as they were forced to exchange their labour to pay for the hut taxes that the colonial government imposed on them and to escape poverty in the rural area. Although the economy of the country grew massively, Black people bore the brunt of the economic changes while white people benefited. The birth of apartheid in 1948 was established to exploit black people further, even at the cost of completely disrupting the family life of Black South Africans and causing irreparable social and psychological damage.

Furthermore, the study presented literature on absent masculinity, matrifocality, and feminine resilience in post-colonial South Africa. The literature revealed the current state of fatherhood in South Africa and its intergenerational transmission from one generation to another. The literature outlined challenges faced by single mothers and female-headed houses including poverty, unemployment, inequality, and GBV in negative media discourses. The literature also provides scholarly context to mothers' resilience in raising successful children. The study further discussed the theoretical framework, to form a basic understanding of post-coloniality, the intersectional burden of femininity, and how the media frames events, people, and issues. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2004) note, post-colonial theory critiques and questions the outcomes of colonialism on the lives, traditions, and culture of previously colonized countries. The dominant ideology of colonialism is continuously influencing the nature of fatherhood, matrifocality, and female-headed households within Black societies. This study takes the perspective that colonialism has not passed and it is continuing in previously colonized countries (the post-colony). The study further maintains that people are not fully independent and that the existence of colonialism seems impossible to erase or dismiss. Adopting postcolonial theory in this research study allowed for the critical analysis of how colonial apartheid experiences relate to an intergeneration culture of absent fatherhood in Black family structure.

The study also adopted the post-colonial feminist theory to address women's issues and problems and how they are experienced differently by women from different regions outside of the West. This was done to critique White feminist (Euro-American) universalization of narratives about rights, equality, and patriarchy and demonstrate that these issues are experienced differently by women from different regions outside of the West, and to challenge the ideology that has belittled the status of women. Furthermore, this was done to respond to colonialism and its legacies on women and to recognize the experiences of women, not only as a victim of colonial oppression but as active agents in the struggle against colonial oppression. Thus, the study discussed the intersectional burden of femininity which adopted the works of Hochschild (1989) around the concept of the second shift. This suggests that women were more likely to share the paid work but men were much more unlikely to share the domestic work at home such as cleaning and childcare.

This combination resulted in an extra burden for women. This is supported by the work of Simone de Beauvoir (1949) in *'The Second Sex'* in the expression that women were forced to focus on motherhood, femininity, and being erotic objects instead of politics or anything else outside the home and family. In South African societies, the double shift of women was a result of industrialization and the migrant labour law in colonial and apartheid days. Most women worked as domestic workers in the homes of white families, where they worked for long hours and had to do domestic activities and assume childcare responsibilities at their home after long hours of work.

This double burden is still visible even in post-colonial South Africa, in most matrifocal societies, women still face the burden of performing domestic activities that include child-care and having to go to work at the same time. In support of the double burden theory, intersectionality (as a theoretical framework) relates to the third wave of feminism and how various aspects of women's experiences and identities such as race, gender, and other social identities combine to create either discrimination or privilege. The work of hook (1981) in *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* show that black women's experiences as victims of multiple oppressions have given them a unique perspective that must be used to shape Black liberation and feminist theory. In the attempt to understand the matrix of oppression that women experience Kimberle Crenshaw unmasked the cultures of oppression and the oppressive systems

that construct our multiple identities and social locations in power and privilege hierarchies.

Since this study was set to investigate the post-colonial analysis of media discourses of female-headed households, it was important to discuss the media framing theory. According to McCombs (1972), the media not only set the agenda but also shapes how the public understands and perceives a topic. Framing of issues, people, and events may be used in the South African press with particular attention paid to how the topics of single mothers and female-headed households in South Africa are framed in such a way that audience perceptions of the issues are shaped by how the media reports or presents them. The issue of a single mother is framed in terms of neglect, reliance on social grants and abusing the state's resources, scapegoating, stereotyping, and neglect of positive outcomes in female-headed households.

The literature discussed in this study was relevant to the findings of the study and was also supported by the theoretical framework adopted by this study. According to the findings above the following can be concluded. The findings of the historical media construction of Black families suggest that the current Black family structure is a legacy of colonialism and apartheid. The migrant labour system mostly created economic opportunities for black men, and wealth for White capitalists and served the interest of the White government. However, it left women in the rural area with the economic brunt of poverty, bearing the difficulties of taking care of their families and the formation of large female headed-households which is still evident in post-colonial South Africa. The female-headed household is a dominant family structure in South Africa. Thus, the media discourse fails to recognize this type of family structure as an emerging form of family. Instead, it is framed as a negative story about a deviation from the norm. Furthermore, the data for this study failed to recognize the role that state intervention plays through child social grants in assisting single mothers to financially support their children, which aids in the alleviation of poverty in some single-mother households. The negative narrative of single mothers can therefore be said to overpower their resilience, hence their resilience is rarely celebrated.

The intergenerational father's absence is traced back to colonial and apartheid times, demonstrating how the past shapes the present. Children who grow up without fathers may internalize this and become absent fathers themselves. They may be pushed to

the urge of perpetuating the legacy and scar of the apartheid migrant labour system that historically gave rise to absent fatherhood. In conclusion, coloniality seems to continue to shape the Black family structure. Thus, the idea of post-colonial experience could be viewed as a premature celebratory ideology because colonial dominance, power, and socio-economic inequalities still shape African family structure. Furthermore, Black societies continue to live the colonial and apartheid legacy even decades after colonialism and apartheid. Thus, single mothers who are confronted with multiple burdens in raising their children should be celebrated, not scorned.



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# ETHICAL CERTIFICATE



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**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**  
**ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

MEETING: 27 July 2021

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/121/2021: PG

**PROJECT:**

Title: Absent masculinity and feminine resilience: A post-colonial analysis of media discourses of female-headed households in South Africa  
Researcher: KS Letsoalo  
Supervisor: Prof T Oyademi  
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A  
School: Languages and Communication Studies  
Degree: Master of Arts in Communication

PROF P MASOKO  
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE  
The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

- Note:**
- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
  - ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
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**TITLE: ABSENT MASCULINITY AND FEMININE RESILIENCE: A POST-COLONIAL ANALYSIS  
OF MEDIA DISCOURSES OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**To : TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**From : SEMONO T.B**

**Date issued : 19 AUGUST 2022**

**Subject : LETSOALO K.S. (201604773)**

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I hereby declare that the above-mentioned dissertation is accurately edited.

The editing process involved refining the work at five distinct levels:

- Editing for structure to help the reader follow the logic of the writer's arguments.
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- Proof-reading to eliminate repetition, spelling errors, punctuation errors, redundant statements, inconsistent formatting and other exasperating distractions.
- Editing to fix citation errors and to ensure that all the sources acknowledged in the text are enlisted in the bibliography. This level of editing involved ensuring that all citations and bibliographic formats are correct and consistent with the method of referencing applied herein.

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Sincerely,



Signature

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