

# **RITUALS AS CULTURAL COFFINS? TOWARDS REINTEGRATING DIVORCED WOMEN INTO SOCIETY: A PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL STUDY**

By

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## **DECLARATION**

By submitting this thesis, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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March 2020

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## **Abstract**

The Zulu culture is patriarchal and androcentric due to its oppressive traditional practices that only apply to women mostly. Notably, Zulu weddings are regarded as metaphoric funerals or even burials for many Zulu women due to the symbolic ‘kist’ that these women carry with them upon transitioning from their father’s house to their husband’s family. These kists signify coffins. Typically, the woman is considered dead in the sense that this young maiden becomes her husband’s “wife”, symbolizing a new identity also due to the fact that ancestors participate in the binding process. She is given over to the ancestors of her husband. Accordingly, this event also signifies that the woman can never return to claim a belonging in her father’s house, even upon divorce or her husband’s death. This particular tradition and cultural practice is deeply embedded in the Zulu community. However, as an African feminist originating from the Zulu tribe, I find this particular practice very violent and extremely harmful to the wellbeing of the Zulu women. Therefore, through the tools of pastoral care, I seek to use transformative methods that could serve as a bridge in reintegrating the Zulu women back into their old identities soon after divorce.

## Abstrak

Die Zulu Kultuur is patriargaal en androsentries as gevolg van sy onderdrukkend tradisionele praktyke wat meestal net van toepassing op vroue is. Veral, Zulu troues is gesien as 'n metaforiese begrafnis of selfs begrafnisse vir baie Zulu vroue as gevolg van die simboliese 'kist' (stoorkis) wat vroue dra wanneer hul van hul Pa na hul man se familie trek. Hierdie kiste simboliseer 'n doodskis. Tipies is die vrou as dood beskou in die sin dat die jong meisie nou 'n man se vrou geword het wat ook simbolies is van die feit dat die voorouers/voorvaders deelneem in die bindingsproses. Sy is oorgegee aan die voorvaders van haar man. Daarvolgens simboliseer hierdie gebeurtenis ook dat sy nooit weer in haar vader se huis behoort nie. Selfs is dit nae skei of haar man se dood. Hierdie besonderse tradisie en kultruele praktyk is ingebed in die Zulu gemeenskap. As a Femanis van a Zulu stam, beskou ek hierdie besondere praktyk uiters skadelik tot die welstand van Zulu vroue. Daarom, deur die gebruik van pastorale gereedskap, wil ek transformatiewe metodes vind wat kan dien as 'n brug tussen Zulu vroue en hul ou indentiteit selfs na skei.

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## Chapter One

### 1.1 Background and Motivation

The Zulu society is patriarchal and androcentric in its nature. Stereotypically, its tradition places marriage as the focus of existence for all members of the society. Accordingly, young men and women are socialised to aspire towards this goal, because marriage is viewed as an epitome of honour. However my focus is on the Zulu women in marriage specifically the position of divorced Zulu women<sup>1</sup>. Classically, young women are groomed into the ideology of becoming someone else's wife from the young age, notably the grooming process is based around how the young woman will serve the clan of the patriarch that she will ultimately marry into. This gender norm is found within many African cultures of the Sub-Saharan Africa.

According to Mbiti, marriage has been described as an institution in which all members of the society are meant to partake in (1975:131-132). Mbiti asserts that marriage is the point where all the members of a given community meet; the living, the dead, as well as those who are not yet born (1975:131-132). This means that the entire ideology of marriage in the African culture is meant to be taken as the highest achievement of honour. Mbiti's description seems to imply that African cultures regard marriage as a responsibility as well as an obligation towards the corporate society. This rings true for the Zulu traditional society. Therefore, those who do not take part in marriage may often be perceived as cursed, rebels or law breakers who are not only abnormal, but also subhuman within the community. As a result, derogatory terms are given to such individuals for refusing to adhere to societal expectations. For an instance, (*isishimane*) for a man which means the one whom women reject or (*isaliwakazi*) for a woman, meaning the one who is rejected by men. Notably, these terms are meant to shame the individuals into adhering with the societal expectations of what it means to be a man or a woman. Due to this, marriage is regarded as a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate (1975:131-132). Remarkably, this societal practice includes the consent of ancestors whose participation is recognised in the performance of rituals that are performed in the marital ceremony (Bennett 2011:34).

However, "research particularly from the second half of the twentieth century has documented the voices of Zulu women who have rejected the institution of marriage as based on highly unequal gender relations" (Preston-Whyte 2015:291). Interestingly, this is due to the fact that

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<sup>1</sup> Here, the focus is on the Zulu women who married traditional Zulu men, not generalizing this on all Zulu women.

marriage for women symbolises something totally different than it does for a man. In a Zulu society marriage for a woman is a symbol of death from her old identity whilst simultaneously for the man it carries a symbol of honour. This death or diminishing of the woman's identity could symbolise subordination and ceasing to one's will because the woman is now under a new patriarchal order or power other than her fathers, this new power house will bring new rules and new forms of existence. Characteristically, on her wedding day the woman is made to carry a kist loaded with her belongings as she transitions to her husband's family. The wedding kist is called *ibhokisi* which symbolises a coffin. Typically, this implies that on the woman's wedding day, her family consider her as dying.

Remarkably, Zulu traditional marriages are embedded in a number of rituals that become binders for all families involved to stay bound. These cultural rituals are only performed on the wedding day to reinforce a vow of two families becoming one in the presence of the living and their dead communities (ancestors). In the second chapter, I shall illustrate in further details the procedure of the rituals involved in the Zulu wedding that symbolise the woman's dying process from her clan.

This topic is deeply personal to me as a divorced Zulu woman. I have seen many women in the traditional Zulu cultural marital settings suffer similar patriarchal oppression, subordination and abuse, especially growing up in Hlabisa, KwaZulu-Natal. Upon divorce, these women would lose their societal status. Interestingly, such treatment was not only in the rural areas but in urban areas as well. I happened to witness similar instances on women where I spent most of my married life in Standerton, Mpumalanga province. Having suffered physical, mental and psychological abuse in my own marriage which ended in a divorce, it was remarkable to witness how divorce also diminished my social status. Interestingly, that kind of experience led me to the discovery of the reasons behind Zulu woman facing marginality from family and society after divorce.

Accordingly, in a traditional Zulu culture, the performance of rituals during a marital ceremony signal that a woman assumes a new identity, she is becoming a wife of the man she is marrying, she ceases being who she was before marriage. The ritual ceremonies involves blood, and other kinds of symbols, as well as the summoning of ancestral presence. Hence, it becomes almost impossible for a woman to return to who she was before marriage. Accordingly, the original family ancestors in the rituals had bid her goodbye on her wedding day. This means she belongs to a new household, new ancestors, new clan name, and new identity and if she died, her

husband's family have to bury her, thus she cannot return to her old family no matter the circumstances. It is this particular conduct, which I argue is life denying for Zulu women. The Zulu rituals are constructed in such a way that they do not anticipate divorce for women, therefore when a woman becomes divorced she becomes the outcast, she is ignored, marginalized and she is stripped of all forms of honor so that no one else in the society imitates her conduct. Interestingly, men divorce willy-nilly without facing similar fate. This method is done to keep women in place by punishing them for giving up on the men and failing the clan. Therefore, my aim is to reimagine rituals that are similar to the ones performed during marital ceremonies that could assist in reintegrating women back into the society without facing ostracism after divorce.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Primarily, divorce is a global issue that has troubled many societies. According to Tembe (2010:16), divorce rates in South Africa in 2002 per 1000 people were 0.81, equivalent to 8.1% rate per 100 marriages. Furthermore, marital satisfaction within the first ten years has declined since the 1970s and continues to decline (Silberstein 1992:22). In line with Tembe's assertions, one marriage in 13 is likely to fail in South Africa. John Feinberg and Paul Feinberg (1993:299 cited in Tembe 2010:16) provide the following statistics from country to country and it varies:

In Arab countries divorce is low. In Jordan in 1989, there were 8.1 marriages per 1000 and 1.21 divorces per 1000. In the same year in Syria, there were 8.8 marriages per 1000 and only 0.73 divorces per 1000. In predominately Catholic countries in Central and South America, marriages far exceeded divorces. In 1988, there were 5.3 marriages per 1000 but only 18 divorces per 1000. In 1990 U.S recorded 1, 175,000 for that year.

However, whilst the study above reports the dynamics of divorces from various contexts, divorced women within the traditional Zulu culture are often rejected by their communities, and even when they try to find solace within their churches, they are often marginalized. Therefore, the study aims to explore the reasons behind these cultural and religious beliefs and

practices of excluding and marginalizing against the divorced women, thus, discover ways of addressing them through pastoral care and counselling as well as the concept of healing.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1.4.1 How can pastoral care and counselling serve as a bridge that could integrate divorced Zulu women back into their communities and the church?

1.4.1.1 What are the root causes of socio-cultural and religious stereotypes imposed on divorced Zulu women?

1.4.1.2 Can pastoral care and counselling assist divorced women to acquire their self-identity, a positive self-image and their human dignity after a failed marriage?

1.4.1.3 Can pastoral care and the concept of healing as well as African traditional healing methods restore peace and stability between divorced women and their communities?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

1.5.1 To explore the role of pastoral care and counselling in serving as a bridge between divorced Zulu women and their families, communities and the church.

The following objectives will guide the main objective:

1.5.1.1 To identify the source of socio-cultural-religious stigmatisation of divorced women.

1.5.1.2 To explore whether pastoral care and counseling can assist divorced Zulu women to acquire a positive self-image, despite the plurality of negativity surrounding them due to socio-cultural labelling and religious judgements.

1.5.1.3 To discover the role of pastoral care and counselling as well as African traditional healing methods in changing the plight of divorced women by empowering them through ritualistic performances.

### **1.5 Hypothesis**

This study will therefore explore if pastoral care and counseling can serve as a bridge to reintegrate divorced Zulu women back into their communities and the church, without stigmatising and/or discriminating against them. Accordingly, ideological bias that has greatly influenced and reinforced the status accorded to the divorced women will be explored. The

study intends to add new knowledge and insights into the existing body of knowledge regarding divorce. Moreover, this information will aid society and churches to accept divorced women back into their communities, thus ensuring their integration.

## **1.6 Research Methodology**

According to Meyer-Welmes & Riet Bons-Storm (1998:19) Practical theology is a discipline of action, whose foremost task lies in the mediation of religion and culture, theological theory and practice, official and lay church. And its point of departure is the practice of church and religious movements in the context of society.

This research is about the experience encountered by the divorced Zulu women in different spheres of their lives as they struggle to reconstruct their self-identity after divorce. It is about regaining restoration of their human dignity, and acceptance back to their communities and the church.

The study is conducted under the discipline of practical theology that is empirical in nature. As a divorced Zulu woman, the researcher values the systems of knowledge of the Zulu traditional ways of doing things and cultural beliefs. There can be little doubt that in the African context, patriarchy, together with culture and religion, serves as the basis for oppressive realities that women experience. Therefore, the methodology that will be followed is an African Feminist lens, this approach will be employed to probe Zulu women's experiences of oppression in the context of marriage in order to expose the different cultural practices that allow men to victimize, objectify and control women in the marital context.

Secondly, another lens that will be employed is that of Chilisa (2012:130), which is the indigenous research methodologies. Indigenous research mythologies are firmly embedded on the concept of ethno philosophy (Chilisa 2012:131). This term denotes the collective worldviews of people that are encoded in language, folklore, myths, metaphors, taboos, and rituals. Thus, it is much relevant to the researcher who intends to discover the roots associated with the behavioral patterns that are prevalent to the Zulus. It is evident that they hold norms that are insensitive and detrimental towards their own mothers, sisters, daughters and fellow human beings. Then, the structure will give the guidance to the researcher on the quality of being human, and the need to embrace and treat the divorced women as God's creation who are indeed created in his image regardless of their different lifetime experiences.

Therefore, I have indicated above that the divorced Zulu women are sometimes called derogatory names; Chilisa (2012:131) argues that, “language expresses the patterns and structures of culture and consequently, influences human thinking, manners, and judgement”. This implies that the issue of stigmatizing against the divorced Zulu women must be rooted out once and for all by using the very same tools of language, rituals, and symbols. Furthermore, according to Chilisa (2012:134), proverbs, like stories, at times convey ideologies of the powerful that preserve dominance of some groups by favoring knowledge and practices that discriminate based on gender, age, ethnicity, social class, as well as physical and mental ability. Similarly, the Zulu traditional custom, by its performance and practices of rituals that are meant to send the girls away with no hope of their return, endorses the male dominance somehow. Upon getting married, the young men are not subjected to any kind treatment that indicate the end of the road to their lives; however, the same cannot be said about women.

## **1.7 Chapter Outline**

Chapter One is an Introduction, stating the background to the study, the research problem and questions, as well as the hypothesis. Discussion and motivation of methodology that will be followed in the study, and indication of the structure of the study.

Chapter Two focuses on rituals taking place within the context of marriage and divorce within the Zulu culture. An investigation will be conducted on how culture influences marriage and divorce particularly in the Zulu nation as the focus of the study.

Chapter Three will focus on the Old and New Testament perspectives on the issue of marriage. This will be done in order to determine the Jewish and Christian marital ideologies. Secondly, the Old and New Testaments also display God’s intentions on marriage and divorce. In line with biblical and theological teachings on marriage and divorce, scholarly views of other theologians will be used as a reference to highlight God’s intent when he created the institution of marriage in the Jewish and Christian religious settings.

Chapter Four will be dealing with the facilitation of pastoral care and counselling as a healing agent and a tool for the divorced women. To achieve this, from a theological point of view, the study will first explore the concept of resurrection theology to find out how it can assist with changing cultural as well as religious perceptions about divorce and the divorced women. This will then be followed by further investigation into the traditional Zulu ways of bringing about

reconciliation and healing between the living and the dead *amadlozi*. The spiritual beings, ancestors (*amadlozi* or *abaphansi*) are highly regarded in the Zulu custom, and are always consulted through different ritual performances and for different reasons. Emanating from the Zulu culture, the chapter will end by discussing African and Christian discourses from the perspective of divorce rituals and it will also look into the classical African concept of Ubuntu.

Chapter Five will provide the summary, the conclusion as well as the recommendations for further research. Basically, the chapter shall be presenting the findings of the whole research. It will present how the study explored the comprehensive and holistic ways of solving the problem of stigmatising divorced women, and also offer practical ways of helping them to cope with divorce. The guiding steps will therefore assist the divorced women get back on their feet again. Finally recommendations for further research will be given.

## **Chapter 2**

### **An Exploration into the Zulu Culture's Ideology of Marriage and Divorce**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In chapter one, we discovered that the Zulu nation views marriage as a drama in which all members of the society should participate in. Secondly, we discovered that members who refused to adhere to this rhythm found themselves marginalized through various forms of social corrections. Third, we observed that even upon divorce women are ostracized for leaving abusive settings which is a method to punish those who refuse to follow the social script. Therefore, chapter two seeks to explore the dynamics of the Zulu society, the cultural ideologies regarding marriage and divorce. In doing so, I seek to understand why marginalization and ostracism become the method for punishing women for leaving abusive marriages.

The Zulu nation prides itself for its unique cultural and traditional practices that make them distinct from other African tribes in the South African context. Typically, the researcher aims to unravel the methods of the Zulu wedding with regards to rituals performed before and after the Zulu wedding. Secondly, I will describe the process of the Zulu wedding before and after, as well as the rituals that are performed to validate the wedding ceremony. Lastly, as has been

discussed in chapter 1, that the ancestors are a significant part of the proceedings, I will therefore elaborate in further details on how this reality is implemented. Moreover, this chapter is going to focus on cultural practices, rituals, and symbols incorporated into the process of the Zulu wedding.

## **2.2 Honour and Shame within the Zulu Culture**

The Zulu nation holds honour and shame culture in high regard. Even though the honour and shame culture is persistent within many African cultures. However, in the Zulu society that honour is more associated with the father than the woman getting married (Bergland 1976:207-6; Kalbing 2018:9). For example, the significance of the bride- wealth payment is associated with the honour of the father of the bride than the mother of the bride. Remarkably, for women honour comes in different shades, throughout history Zulu women who were lobola'd, married and bore children, have received substantial respect in the communities where they lived, gained considerable status and were given certain domestic powers for being able to live up to the expectation of what it means to be a wife (Rudwick & Posel 2015:290). However, it has been observed that the *bride wealth* payment often keeps many women trapped in abusive marriages which demonstrate women's oppression in the Zulu community (Rudwick & Posel 2015:297). In the end, the woman will often end up alone and isolated from family, friends, and community after divorce, because of the honour and shame cultural context.

## **2.3 Social Constructionism**

According to Sahin (2006), the paradigm of social constructionism is based on the philosophy of human experience. Franklin (1995:345) affirms that social constructionism has dominated the study of social problems. The origins of social constructionism draws on the work of George Kelly (Mair, 1989 cited in Diako, 2012:27) "an approach to human inquiry, which encompasses a critical stance toward commonly shared assumptions". This approach is dependent on the assumptions that social constructionism reinforces the understanding of dominant social groups. Moreover, it deduces that the reality of life is socially constructed. Accordingly, social constructionism deals with knowledge of what "reality" is (Berger & Luckmann, 1966:77). Considering that, people are not born in a vacuum but in a society and culture with predetermined patterns of behavior, therefore reality of life in this regard is reinforced through social construction.

Notably, this reality is transmitted from one generation to the other. Knowledge of reality is part of the worldviews. Worldviews fall into two categories, namely, objectivism (or positivism) and subjectivism (Sale et al, 2002:46). Accordingly, the reality of life suggests that the worldviews are questionable. Poetschke (2003:2) even goes further to ask whether there is something called ‘real’ world ‘out there?’ In alignment to Sahin’s assertion, the reality of life generates knowledge and ideas sparked by social processes instead of individuals (Gergen, 1994:108). The author adds that "knowledge is not something people possess somewhere in their heads, but rather, something people do together" (Gergen, 1994:270).

Experience is derived from interaction with others rather than a specific situation. From a social constructionism perspective, there are various diverse competing viewpoints of the world that constitute experience. The world has no single true view. Initially, Modernist and structuralist frameworks revealed that absolute truth, objective reality and knowledge as contextual factors enabled the society to arrive at “common agreements about a state of affairs” (Gergen, 1994:38), namely, experience. Differences that exist between absolute truth and objective reality (Gergen, 1994:99) rendered reality to be subjective (Becvar & Becvar, 2000:86). Knowledge is viewed by Hare-Mustin (1994:80) as “multiple, fragmentary, context-dependent, and local”. From the reality perspective, “social constructionism of reality” is the product of cultural, historical, political and economic contexts (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:48).

Therefore, the arguments above indicate that as part of social construction knowledge has provided the basis for the subject under investigation that is viewed as the contributing factor. Because knowledge is socially constructed, it varies from culture to culture, society to society and community to community. Furthermore, this variation is based on diverse belief systems and values regarding human development. Consequently, the preceding discussion heralded the social structures, such as marriages are regulated by rules and regulations. Which means that marriage is intended to shape the behavior of the individuals in the society and consequently, the male and female interaction.

Remarkably, social constructionism has also identified language as a unique feature to forge interaction and interrelationships. Below, I shall define how language is used by cultures as a tool for shaming individuals who do not adhere to social norms.

## **2.4 Language as Cultural socialization**

Initially, reality cannot be understood outside the ambit of interpretations whereas objectivists hold the view that the real world is dependent on the hypothesis that has been built and tested

through research (Ingram, 1990:86). Moreover, while “speaking their own language, people also speak the language of their masters, benefactors, advertisers” (Ingram, 1990:86). Constructivists view meaning and understanding emerging from language as always being contextual and time bound (Bruner, 1990:46). Emerging from the passage is that meaning and knowledge constructed through human language must be relevant and specific. Whilst language is not considered as, a reflective of the world, but it can generate it to ensure the coordination and regulation of social life (Gergen, 1994:40).

Characteristically, cultures use language to coerce individuals into the drama of marriage; they also use language to shame those who fail to partake in marriage. This rings true for the Zulu culture. As mentioned above, the Zulu society uses derogatory terms as a method to bring in alignment the individuals who are seen as failing to follow the rules, especially those that fail to follow cultural mandate. Moreover, folktales and proverbs are other forms of literary methods used by cultural gate keepers to socialize a society (Chilisa 2012:131). Initially, folktales are narrated by women and, in particular, the grandmother, “the grandmother is the performer par excellence, forever ready to entertain her young charges and to impart to them the wisdom and philosophy of life she has learnt from her own, lived experience” (Canonici 1995:19). Interesting to note, language is used both as a method to initiate action or to shame those who fail at the drama of life. For an instance in the Zulu culture, derogatory terms are used both for insulting those who failed to marry, as well as for those whose marriage had collapsed; therefore, this shows that there is no middle ground.

## **2.5 The Zulus as a Nation**

According to the tribal storytellers, the Zulu people descended from the so-called Nguni people, who lived in central or east Africa, in a mystical land called Embo (Krige & Comaroff 1981:3). According to an article by Jeff Guy titled: *Shaka kaSenzangakhona- A Reassessment* (1996), it is generally believed that the Zulus gathered enormous admiration and fame primarily through the military genius of the warrior king Shaka kaSenzangakhona Zulu. King Shaka’s efforts to unify the Zulus and stave off the British, remains the subject of much discussion in South Africa as well as the entire world (Guy 1996:25). Accordingly to Guy (2010:26) “in the Zulu tradition, women and cattle determines the wealth of a man; and the more daughters and cattle he has, the more wives he can afford and the wealthier he is”. Furthermore, different scholars also maintain that Zulus are a proud nation that treasure their heritage and as such, are conservative.

Accordingly, Zulus have “a deep sense of love and admiration of the past, partly, a growing appreciation of traditional thought-patterns expressed in rituals and symbols” (Bergland 1976:18).

The above description portrays a patrilineal nation whose dependency is on the King. Initially, the King as a male figure would have patriarchal rulership tendencies that privilege men over women. Secondly, due to the above evidence, daughters that are born in this setting are seen as an economic value that boosts the patriarchal economic status, which proves that women are mostly regarded as objects who do not carry much human value. Haddad (2002:95) argues that quite often Zulu women are treated by their husbands as if they are owned by them due to the husbands having paid (*ilobolo*) for them.

Below I will explore the Zulu culture with regards to marriage to illustrate further how the value of women rests in the androcentric process.

### **2.5.1 Zulu Culture in Connection to Marriage**

Different sources define culture in many ways, however, they always conclude that the life of an ethnic group is seen through its practices, beliefs, values, and codes of conduct of that particular ethnic group. Culture has an influence over social life and policy-making (Khoza 2005:104-107). Samuel and Sugden (2003:62) assert that culture is a massive and dynamic structure of behaviours, ideas, attitudes, values, habits, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies, and practices peculiar to a certain people.

Initially, marriage, like other family transitions, disturbs the family stability (Nel 2007:165). According to Nel (2007:164) “for the Zulu, the rituals and practices associated with marriage affirm and reinforce the family as a unit. This is unlike the Western understanding where marriage is the union of two individuals”. Moreover, this is “unlike the Western approach in which the unit of study is the individual, for the Zulu the unit of study is the family” (Nel 2007:165).

Subsequently, when it comes to the issue of marriage in the Zulu culture, Ngubane (1981:86) asserts that it is the duty of the bride’s father to complete and approve the union by providing the essential sacrificial animals, which not only render his daughter fully married, but also guarantee her fertility. For an instance, should the father fail to provide such sacrificial animals, he is likely to be held responsible if his daughter suffers certain misfortunes (Krige & Comaroff

1981:86). Such misfortunes include should she fail to conceive, miscarriage, or if the babies become sick or die. Moreover, in such cases of misfortune, it is usually believed that it is the father of the bride's own ancestors who interfered with the girl's fertility (Krige & Comaroff 1981:86).

This meant that a marriage was executed through the transfer of bride-wealth in cattle from the prospective husband to the bride's father or other male relative such as (*umalume*), the uncle (Kalbing 2018:9). This subsequently assumed the culture of bride-wealth/lobola payment as an ancient practice, which became popular, and is still respected till this day. This also meant that a father might not consider the marriage preference of his daughter for whom she would marry, however, he remained the ultimate and sole negotiator of the bride-wealth in cattle (Kalbing 2018:9-10). This could therefore be understood and be interpreted as the beginning of the disordered nature of relationships, in systems which believe that women are men's property (Ackerman 2004:234).

Moreover, the institution of marriage from the Zulu context places emphasis on procreation, rather than companionship. Nevertheless, it has also been acknowledged that the institution of marriage sometimes becomes a space where husbands exercise their male dominance and power to abuse their wives and children. According to Harding (2003:208), there is a general belief that men are by nature fitted for dominance and rule in their households as husbands, fathers and masters. This means that women are regarded as inferior in nature, and are duty bound to be submissive to the rule of their superiors (Harding 2003:208). The researcher reckons that this notion perpetuates oppression of women.

Interestingly, Kalbing (2018:9) reveals that in the ancient Zulu Kingdom, the king was the one who was responsible for controlling the whole process of marriage. Initially, he constantly exercised his power by forcing young women into unwanted marriages with older men, who had served in the military for up to 20 years (Kalbing 2018:9). According to the author, the women were coerced to enter into loveless marriages to men as an incentive, or a token of appreciation for their loyal service in the military. However, in colonial Natal, where chiefly authority had since subsided during the 1880's because of the growing dominance of the Zulu Kingdom, and the subsequent firmer control of the colonial authorities, fathers then took more prominent roles than chiefs in marriage negotiations (Kalbing 2018:9).

Haddad (2002:95) argues that often than not, traditional women have little to say over their bodies. This rings true to Zulu women married to traditional Zulu men both in rural and urban

settings. Denise Ackerman (1993b:22) asserts that patriarchy as the legal economic and social system validates and enforces the sovereignty of the male head of the family over its other members, wives, children and slaves. Furthermore, patriarchy as a social historical religious and economic system reveals deep signs of androcentricism, which is defined as male-centeredness: basically what is thought of as being universally human or generally valid norms have been exclusively described and analysed by men (Ackerman 1993b:22). As a result, the Zulu society is fabricated through androcentric norms, which sentence women to objectification. The ancient Zulu Kingdom had thrived in objectifying women and treating them like slaves, however, the modern Zulu society continue to play the same role of objectifying its women to this day.

I will now discuss the practice of *ilobola*, which is the first stage of marital initiation.

### **2.5.2 The Ilobola Process**

Initially, when the time comes for a man to ask a woman's hand in marriage, which is known as (*ukukhonga*). Nel (2007:170) states that this "Zulu custom is for representatives of both families to negotiate lobola towards the end of the courtship"

Notably, the family of the bride and groom become actively involved in the processes of negotiations prior to the actual tying of the knot (Elphick 2012:73). These discussions take place between the groom's delegates and the girl's father regarding the amount of cows or cattle to be paid for the woman (Bergland 1976:207-6). These (*ilobola*) negotiations or discussions for the bride-wealth payment, form part of a series of other several rituals that are performed as a cultural requirement. Accordingly, this process is subsequently followed by the actual payment of *ilobola* or the dowry, to the bride's parents (Bergland 1976:207-6).

In the traditional Zulu culture, this is a very important step. It is a traditional ritual that is done not only to strengthen the relationship between the couple, but also to mark the beginning of a union between two families (Rudwick & Posel 2015:289). According to the authors, initially, the significance of *ilobolo* payment in a Zulu context is a practice that can delay or even prevent marriage, depending on its process (Rudwick & Posel 2015:289). Customarily, *ilobolo* is paid in cattle and can amount to eleven or more cows, depending on the social status of the father of the bride (Rudwick & Posel 2015:289). However, it can also be paid in both cash and cows (Rudwick & Posel 2015:289) and the amount also varies according to different families.

As stated above, the purpose of this traditional exercise is to form a long-term and lasting bond between two families (Rudwick & Posel 2015:289). However, this also symbolises the meeting of the ancestors (*amadlozi*) of the uniting clans (Bergland 1976:207). According to Nel (2007:55),

“an essential part of the negotiations are the ancestors. As an integral part of the Zulu family they, to a large degree, determined the family’s the level of differentiation. Therefore, as part of the family unit they are emotionally present in the lobola negotiations (Nel 2007:102). Lobola negotiations may fail for a number of reasons. What is less obvious in the failure of these negotiations is the role the ancestors have in the process. The ancestors determined to a significant degree the family’s level of differentiation and thus the compatibility of the families involved in the wedding” (2007:172)

Remarkably, when it comes to the payment, sometimes the father of the groom can also contribute with financial assistance for his son (Rudwick & Posel 2015:289). However, some scholars have acknowledged that nowadays very few men in our contemporary settings receive financial support from their fathers. Accordingly, Rudwick & Posel (2015:289) assert that the custom of paying ilobolo “is persistent particularly in African Zulu society and has been understood as symbolising a man’s masculinity and a role as an economic provider” (2015:289). Therefore, bride-wealth (*ilobolo*) is a cultural requirement that is paid by the groom to the family of the prospective bride. It is paid whether the wedding is a customary, church or civil union (Rudwick & Posel 2015:289). This means that even ministers are also part of this classical Zulu tradition.

Remarkably, the wealthier men tend to neglect the limit and offer more cattle to edge other struggling men out of the marriage market (Shadle 2003:178). New studies have found that recently, a lot of parents are basing bride-wealth on the bride’s background, her education, and the social position of her family (Heeren et al. 2011:66), which is something that never used to happen back in the day. However, Mugambi (2013:533) denies the contemporary assumptions surrounding the ilobolo payment, which suggest that it compensates the parents for the expense of raising their daughter, or it is paid to settle debts. The author insists that ilobolo is a basic requirement which forms part of cultural pride (Mugambi 2013:533). On the contrary, Elphick (2012:73) argues that the payment of ilobolo humiliates the status of women. He further supports the notion that the traditional ritual of ilobolo compensates the parents for raising their daughters. However, Elphick believes that far from degrading women, it actually adds value to

them and protects their human rights (2012:73). This statement is consistent with the traditional Zulu belief that *ilobolo* makes a woman a person of value by honouring her family and her clan for nurturing her. Thus, its basic function is to build relationships between the two families and their ancestry. As a result, Lindley concludes by saying that “(uku-lobola) lies at the foundation of the structure of native society here, and has been protective of a world of good” (2012:72). Ultimately, “successful negotiations provide the bride’s family with the assurance that the groom’s family has the resources to care for their daughter and her future children” (Nel 2007:173)

I shall now discuss the exchanging of gifts that is part of a stage involved in the process in the Zulu wedding

### **2.5.3 Exchange of Gifts**

Within the Zulu context, it is a general practice that prior to the actual tying of the knot, cattle and or other goods are transferred from the family of the groom to the family of the bride (Elphick 2012:72). Notably, other than the dowry, the gifts from the groom’s family traditionally known as (*izibizo* or *umembeso*) are exchanged (Bergland 1976:207). The exchange of gifts could also take place after the wedding ceremony (these are called *umabo*), which serves an important stage in the wedding rhythm.

Scholars acknowledge that rituals differ from family to family. Some rituals involve the slaughtering of an animal such as a cow or goat, together with the drinking of the traditional beer *umqombothi* (Bennett, 2011:34). Other times, such ceremonies are performed without any slaughtering, only traditional beer drinking (*umqombothi*) and the communal cooking of food (Bergland 1976:209). These ritualistic performances are accompanied by long speeches which communicate specific messages to the ‘living dead’, better known as the ancestors (Mbiti 1991:85). According to Nel (2007:167) “Rituals provide Zulu families with socially acceptable and orderly processes with which they can deal with the anxiety associated with family transitions”

I will now explain in further detail who the ancestors are, and the role they play in relation to the Zulu wedding.

## **2.6 Ancestors**

According to Nel (2007:164-165), ancestors are important in that whenever there is a wedding or other important traditional ceremony, it is the unification of a particular family and another family. This signifies that the bride would be given a new surname, and slaughtering cattle and goats with the sole object that is to inform the ancestors” (Nel 2007:164-165).

Ancestors are believed to be supreme beings who hold special powers and are perceived to be very close to God (Karkkainen 2013:75). In this sense, ancestors are regarded as the aspect of African spirituality that hold families and communities together (Karkkainen 2013:75). Mutiso (1984:9) asserts that “ancestors are considered as mediators and guarantors of solidarity and progress of the community of the living” (1984:9). Louw (2008:166) concurs with the above assertions by affirming that in most African cultures, ancestors are regarded as protectors of life and community. As a result, they are constantly consulted through cultural practices and ritualistic performances in almost every occasion (Louw 2008:166). Nel (2007:168) says that “through marriage rituals, the ancestors are triangled into the family emotional process as a calming presence”

At every stage of the traditional Zulu wedding the functional presence of the ancestors is invoked (Nel 2007:169). As a result, in a traditional Zulu context, the rituals for ancestors performed at weddings are said to bind together the living and the dead. In the case of a wedding ceremony, the bride who hails from other descendants, is put under the care of her husband's ancestors through the performance of rituals such as slaughtering of an animal, traditional beer drinking, singing and dancing (Nel 2007:169). There is a belief that failure to adhere to such, may result in a bride and her children being not protected by the affinal ancestors (Ngubane in Krige & Comaroff 1981:86). “Everything in the Zulu wedding would be maintained by the presence of the ancestors” (Nel 2007:167)

Below, I will venture into the analysis of rituals that are performed at the wedding in order for the woman to be merged with ancestors of her husbands family name.

### **2.6.1 Rituals**

Considering that rituals are deeply rooted in human societies, it must be noted that there are cultural concepts that are difficult to define. This notion is supported by Schneider (2007:128) who states that defining a concept of ritual remains a daunting task for most scholars of ritual studies. The complexity emanates from the fact that the scientific study of ritual remains

fragmented. Perry's (2015) article titled; *The View from Hell* is of the view that although religious studies scholars such as Ronald R. Grimes and William James have attempted to define ritual within a tidy framework, their reduction has missed some key important aspects of the major human domain. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (1998), it is thus possible to view ritual as a way of defining or describing humans. This article having been revised by Hans Penner (1998) suggests that a ritual is the performance of ceremonial acts prescribed by tradition or by sacerdotal decree. In attempting to describe it, it has been said that a "ritual is a specific, observable mode of behavior exhibited by all known societies and can be expressed in words or action"<sup>2</sup>. Caroline's (2017) article titled: *The evolution of modern rituals: 4 hallmarks of today's rituals* classifies rituals into the following:

- rituals for birth, death, coming-of-age and marriage
- rituals to mark the harvest or new year
- rituals to inaugurate a president
- rituals to salute the fallen

Van Gennep 1909 (cited in Lan 2018:2) in his book titled: *Les Rites de Passage* subdivided ritual into rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation, while Lukken (1995:124) subdivided them into crisis rituals, cyclic rituals and rites of passage (Terrin 1984:18). Rituals are performed to signify changes or transitions of an individual in a society and they "accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another" (Lan 2018:2).

In this regard, rituals in the Zulu culture are performed when a young woman or man is coming-of-age, which is regarded as a ritual or a rite of passage (Magwaza 2008:482). According to the author, in the coming of age of a girl into womanhood, the ritual involves informing the ancestors (*amadlozi*) of the fact that the girl is now matured (Magwaza 2008:482), and therefore ready to become a wife and mother, consequently the ancestors (*amadlozi*) blesses the girl with fertility. To follow on from this, "in the Zulu rite, the young girls by means of a goat (sacrifice) expel the blackness (*isinyama*) threatening their statute when one of them has broken a sexual interdiction" (Nel 2007:167). During this process and as a ritual, the girl is

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<sup>2</sup> <http://britannica.com>

separated and removed from the rest of the family, and would be placed in a special hut (*umgonqo*) for a period of one week together with her female peers (Magwaza 2008:482-3). Interestingly, it is believed that during this time, the ancestors (*amadlozi*) recognise and make contact with her within the hut. After a week has passed and the day of the ceremony of (*umemulo*) comes, there are quite a lot of rituals in which the girl participates with her father and the whole clan. These include the slaughtering of a cow, congratulatory speeches to prepare her for the challenges of adulthood, as well as singing and dancing to celebrate the girl's coming of age (Magwaza 2008:483).

However, in the case of a married woman, it has also been acknowledged that a married woman is faced with a dilemma of being affected by her maiden ancestors as well as those of her husband. This dilemma underlines that a married woman has a separate identity from that of her affinal clan (her husbands). Therefore, her function as a married woman is to form a connection between the two patrilineages (Hammond-Tooke 1981:4). However, after giving birth, a married woman would move from the one descendant family to the other, because "a woman's status in the homestead is based on the number of children she bore" (Kalbing 2018:15-16). The author further explains that besides this movement, after menopause she may take some meat which was sacrificed for the ancestors as she is now regarded as the matriarch (Kalbing 2018:15-16). Therefore, when she dies her son, as one of his patrilineal ancestors brings her back, to be fully incorporated into her affinal group. A journey that began as a bride is finally completed, and this passage indicates that during this long journey (*umendo or udwendwe*) (Ngubane in Krige & Comaroff 1981:86), the woman was able to mediate issues that affected patrimony and exogamy within the Zulu nation. However, remarkably there is no process about the ritual performed in respect of divorced Zulu women.

It has been argued that "by affirming the presence of the ancestors at every stage of the traditional Zulu marriage celebrations, a sense of community and belonging is ensured" (Nel 2007:180). This then does leave many questioned unanswered on the presence of ancestors during divorce.

I shall now explain the wedding day and the events of that specific day that carry significant borders upon the woman's return towards the homestead after divorce.

## 2.7 The wedding day and the Kist

According to Nel (2007:165), “the togetherness of the Zulu bride’s family is disturbed by her leaving and her anxious family seeks a new homeostatic balance. However, the groom’s family must also find ways to rebalance and deal with the disruption of the family togetherness due to the addition of the new family member” (Nel 2007:165).

Initially, on the wedding day, the Zulu family of the bride performs one last ritual which is the sprinkling of the slaughtered cow’s bile on to the bride’s wrists, ankles and the forehead prior the wedding day. Another ritual is performed in the morning of the wedding in the cattle kraal, where the father (the uncle or brother) of the bride speaks to the ancestors to alert them that the woman in question is leaving the fold (Ngubane in Krige & Comaroff 1981:86). Therefore, the expectation is that the ancestral protection should be requested. Nel (2007:167) elaborates that “the ancestors would be informed that this person is now leaving this family (surname) to join the other family (surname)”. Subsequently, this particular ritual is usually the one that validates the breaking of the familial bonds between the woman and her blood relatives. From that day onwards, the woman is considered a stranger in her father’s house. Furthermore, “the reporting to the ancestors is about the transition taking place between the two families” (2007:182). Similarly, the groom’s family also reports to their ancestors by slaughtering a cow that a new family member is joining their family (Ngubane 1977: 65).

As indicated by the series rituals above, the term ‘marriage’ in a Zulu context denotes (*umendo* or *udwendwe*) which means, “going on a journey of no return” (Ngubane cited in Krige and Comaroff 1981:85). This implies that a woman is not expected to return at any costs. Nel (2007:166) argues that “since Zulu families are patrilineal, the bride leaves her birth family to become a member of her husband’s family. She not only leaves her family home, but also the family relationships, her place of belonging and security. The bride is expected to transfer her loyalties from her birth family to that of her husbands” (Nel 2007:166).

On the wedding day, the bride takes all her clothes and other precious belongings carried in a kist (marriage box); which is a sophisticated wooden box, to the groom’s home. The kist is culturally likened to a coffin, which signifies that the bride now belongs to the groom’s family and subsequently with his ancestors (*amadlozi*). This implies that in a traditional Zulu culture, a marriage (*umendo* or *umshado*) is a final destiny for a woman. In this sense, she will never or cannot return to her family of origin, as she now belongs to her husband’s family. Furthermore, “the bride loses her place of belonging and communion when she marries” (Nel 2007:173).

This means that divorce is not an option for a woman. According to the researcher, this signals the inequality of power and the unfair patterns of cultural treatment and it illustrates the oppression of women within the Zulu culture. According to Jones (2000:79), exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence are all forms of oppression, which are unacceptable. At the same time, the above assertions may also be an indication that traditionally, divorce does not exist or was never meant to happen for Zulu couples. As a result, the problem arises when the marriage fails, the woman is consequently stigmatised and ostracised by her community and her clan. She is perceived as a failure and disappointment who let her family down. How did the Zulu's not create a re-reporting which is meant to reverse the process should things not work out in marriage for the women in transition?

## **2.8 Divorce**

Many societies feel threatened by divorce. However, in the Zulu custom the divorced woman's parents not only feel let down but also shamed by a daughter who failed to hold on to the marriage together. Their honour is culturally stripped away by such an incident of divorce. This loss of honour signifies that the Zulu culture does not have room for divorce. Therefore, Zulu women often find themselves belonging in their culture, but also in the same way, find themselves rejected by it when it comes to the issue of divorce. This reality often compels them to stay in abusive marriages, because by failing to persevere, and rather choosing divorce, they automatically become social outcasts. Rudwick & Posel (2015:297) assert that the woman's family and the society expects her to endure or persevere (*bekezela*) at all costs and against all the odds.

Different cultures and generations give different forms and attitudes to the phenomena of marriage and divorce (Sono 1994:123). Thus, it must always be noted that with all forms of marriage and divorce, there are universal as well as specific dimensions. As stated above, in the traditional Zulu culture, divorce is a symbol of shame, and that may be the reason why a woman may be scorned or ostracised. However, it is quite interesting that for many African traditional societies, a divorced man can remarry soon after a divorce (Dyrness and Karkkainen 2008:520), and is often encouraged and supported by the whole family. Whilst for a woman, this move can be interpreted as a taboo, and it can also be linked to promiscuity. Therefore, the woman shall remain a full member of her spouse's family and clan, regardless of what happens to her in future (Dyrness & Karkkainen 2008:521).

Subsequently, many divorced women suffer a sense of failure, guilt, and disbelief after marital separation, since they are culturally treated by their families and communities as though they are no longer fully human (Cox and Desforges 2017:12). What has also been acknowledged is the fact that divorced women may develop doubts and uncertainties which could cloud their judgements, as they end up feeling less autonomous. This is due to the fact that many women are often not sure whether to continue with their marital surname or to return to their maiden names (Sandfield 2006:156-157). This signifies a detrimental loss of identity. As to be expected in her return to the old community, the ostracism through name calling is meant to distort the identity and self-worth of the divorced women (Goffman 1990:11-12). In agreement with the above statement, Louw (2008:427) states that “stigmatisation and labelling are a form of cultural and social isolation”.

Therefore, it goes without saying that divorced women lose their self-identity and pride because of the socio-cultural utterances and labelling attributed to them, which subsequently results in psychological trauma and stress. This is a form of psychological and emotional abuse towards divorced women. The ramifications of isolation are such that some women may resort to substance abuse as a way of coping to numb the pain and to avoid embarrassment. This could be understood even though not accepted because as Ackerman (cited in Phiri & Nadar 2004:234) rightly puts it, “we are beings always in the process of becoming more ourselves through our relationship with others”. Therefore, ostracism and exclusion by one’s family and community could be understood as secondary trauma (Louw 2008:427).

## **2.9 Conclusion**

Firstly, I began the chapter by explaining the dynamics of social constructionism, and its role and methods that cultural contexts choose to socialize themselves. Secondly, I explored the Zulu language in how it addresses itself in commanding its counterparts to observing cultural rules and norms. I also investigated the Zulu nation and its culture concerning marriage, tracing back the embeddedness of the oppressive patriarchal norms towards women that begin from the Zulu Kings, and how the same norms have been passed down from one generation to another, in the Zulu culture by fathers to their sons. Furthermore, older Zulu women to the young also perpetuate the same oppressive norms in order to uphold the dominant systems. I further explained the process towards marriage and all the proceedings that take place in

validating the day of the woman's death from her father's clan while being born in the new patriarchal clan of her husband's.

## **Chapter 3**

### **An Investigation of Mariage and Divorce from Jewish and Christianity Scriptural Understanding: Its Repercussions On the Zulu Culture**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

My initial argument from chapter 2, showed that divorced Zulu women receive the most inappropriate treatment after divorce due to the rituals performed when she is getting married. Furthermore, the wedding day for the Zulu woman signifies death due to the kist that she carries upon exiting her family house. The kist she carries, culturally symbolises a coffin therefore, this means that the Zulu woman is considered dead amongst her family, and is only alive through her husbands family but also as a new individual. Ultimately, this should mean that she can never return back to her family house or community should her marriage come to an end.

In this chapter the researcher will investigate the concept of marriage from the Jewish and Christian perspectives which are both emanating from the Western culture and norms. The aim of investigating the two cultural contexts is to trace the ideology behind the intitution of marriage in order to understand how it intersects with the Zulu understanding of what marriage should be. Secondly, the researcher will observe the Jewish, Christian and Zulu cultural understanding of divorce in order to understand the dehumanization that is exerted on women upon divorce.

Cultural intersectionality is the reality shared by many worlds who underwent the history of colonialism through the Christian enterprise which covered 85percent of the earth. In the scramble for African lands by Europeans, Dube asserts that "African communities and their lands were, of course, neither consulted nor invited to the Berlin Conference. The participants were Western European powers, traders, and their missionaries. Africa, surrounded by numerous suitors, did not have the choice to choose a suitor nor to refuse one" (Dube 2012:3).

She further contends that the Europeans in doing such were attempting to wipe out the African culture in order to inject them with the Western cultural ideology. This rings true when one considers the Bible which is the tool that was used to enable this particular mission. Secondly, the fact that Africans have to perform two marital settings the Western wedding, which is recognised by the state and the traditional wedding which is a cultural identification with where the individuals emanate from.

The biblical text is a foreign text born in ancient cultures. Furthermore, the Western culture has forced itself to live and mature within contact zone of other cultures (Dube 2010:362). In validating this understanding, Dube gives an example of the contextual worlds that the Hebrew Bible came into contact with the likes of Canaanites, Amorites and the various imperial cultures of Babylon, Assyria, Persia and Egypt. Not only those but the New Testament also comes with its own books that emerged from various cultural contexts too, like Galatians, Corinthians, Ephesians, Romans, Colossians and Philippians. Such names are verifications of various ancient cultures that interacted with the Christian gospel during the days of the early church. This only goes to illustrate that the biblical text has given itself the right to become a tool of disruption for cultures, because wherever it situates itself there is a push and pull of power involved.

### **3.2 The Role of Colonialism**

According to Guardiola-Saenz (1997:72), “a cultural text is not confined to the borders of its written pages, but to the whole culture that embraces its interpretations. To understand its meaning one needs to go beyond and read also the cultural conditions that have surrounded its production and consumption... A cultural text should not be only read for the history it reflects but also for the history it has made: the political, moral, economic and social consequences that the text has affected in the culture” (Guardiola-Saenz 1997:72).

In connection to the statement above, religion plays a significant role in influencing cultures (Nkansah-Obrempong 2007:1). In this particular case, the African cultures it intersects with. Dube has pointed out above, that Christian missionaries showed interest in the cultural context of Africans, they condemned, criticised and advocated for the erosion of African cultures under colonialism. That statement on its own reflects on the entanglements that religion disrupted upon colonization within the African context. Furthermore, Elphick (2012:65) mentions that

missionaries attempted to alter, and therefore transform aspects of African culture in cosmology, ethics, marriage, gender relations, agriculture, state structure, legal systems, folkways, ceremonies, rites of passage, clothing, as well as forms of speech. This was done probably as a way of rejecting African culture and to annihilate it in its entirety.

Missionaries also decided to study and preserve those cultural traits that they admired and respected the most (Elphick 2012:65). This practice then resulted in Africans being undermined and downgraded. However, it is quite interesting to note that even though missionaries criticised and reviled the African way of living, similarities are detected in their own cultures, and this indicates hypocrisy. According to Elphick (2012:72), even the practice of lobola was also not entirely foreign to Western norms. During the time when the missionaries first arrived in our African soil, the dowry and its near mirror-image, was still practiced and fully realised in Europe. “Yet (lobola) was seen as the sale of women in Africa; fathers ‘sold’ their daughters for material gain, the missionaries claimed” (Elphick 2012:72). This view suggests that religion cultural way of being had to be incarnated into the minds and thought forms of African people as well. The arrival of a new religion in Africa demanded that Africans should adopt a new approach that would reflect the westernised theological context.

In this sense, Gwynne & Hicks (1994:47) explains that “the process by which major changes that take place within a culture in response to the influences of another is called acculturation” (1994:47). This process occurred a great deal during the time when missionaries came to introduce the gospel to the African context. Hence, the Christian Bible became a theological document used by Christian missionaries to minister the truth of the Christian faith to the Zulu nation and other diverse cultures. Christianity injected Western worldviews into Africans, problematizing the African identity with its norms and foreign practices which were made to be the new African culture. However, there is a constant need for Africans to remain true to their African identities, and seeking to deviate from Western acculturation, this particular process is known as inculturation. Gwynne & Hicks (1994:47) say that “there are three main, and somewhat overlapping ways in which the process of enculturation takes place; through symbols, through imitation, and through experience”. Initially “inculturation seeks to ground the identity of African Christians not primarily in the historical hegemony of its dogmas, but rather in the apparatus of difference through which the ‘cultural imagery’ inscribes the consciousness of its own particular self-presentation in acts of theological practice” (Antonio 2006:30).

Therefore, from the above argued realities it shows that while “speaking their own languages, Africans also cannot avoid speaking the language of their masters” (Ingram 1990:86). In this instance the masters being the colonizers therefore the Zulus are caught up in hybrid identities because of colonization and the constant struggle to belong to pure African cultures which is engulfed in the Western hegemony and ideologies which have engulfed their lives through institutionalised systems including religion. However, the Bible as a cultural document which is deeply embedded in the lives of the Jewish people and Greco-Romans should affirm the value of other cultures as well, instead of working in an opposing direction. This means that the theological context has to embrace the culture of the Zulu nation as well.

### 3.3 Marriage

Diako (2012:89) argues that it is therefore not easy to formulate a definition of marriage as the paradigm of social constructionism which indicates that the society/individuals bring different views in the construction of marriage. The construct of marriage varies from society to society, and its definition is largely dependent on a specific socially constructed group who hold different belief systems (Crapo 1996:1174). For an example in the Western culture, marriage is about the union of the two people, whilst it is different from the Zulu society. Secondly, the issue of the dowry in the West is not a mandate like it is in the African marriages.

Moreover, the issue of procreation as a purpose of marriage seems to be a theme that runs in all cultures, however in the Western society this mandate does not seem to hold oppressive grounds like in the Zulu society. As it has been argued in chapter 2, in the Zulu community, marriage is viewed as an institution responsible for procreation (Harding 2003:211). In this sense, procreation is a product of two individuals who are socially legitimate to perform sexual activity with an aim to provide the continuity of society (Ngubane cited in Krige & Comaroff 1981:90). Mark Harding says that even in Roman culture, concerned by the falling birth rates, the Roman governor; “Augustus encouraged marriage as a stimulus to population increase” (2003:88). This indicates that in different Western cultures, marriage was and still is understood as the only potential relationship in which legitimate children could be born and raised.

Furthermore, the Greco-Roman world’s ideology of marriage is traced from the New Testament. The New Testament gives a historical Western cultural view of marriage whilst interacting with the Jewish cultural views on marriage. Accordingly, “marriage is not only a building block of society and the church, but also occupies a key place in human life” (Femi

Njie 1994:48). Therefore, in order for the marriage to be sustained, the Christian Bible pronounced that “wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, for a husband has authority over his wife just as Christ has authority over the church... And so, wives must submit completely to their husbands” (Ephesians, 5:22-24). Interestingly, whilst the Western society prides itself in having different views regarding marriage, the theme of female obedience seems to be a theme synonymous in all cultures, the Western women are also objectified as much as the African women in their cultures in marriage.

However, it must be highlighted that for the African context, the winds of change brought during the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been felt in the African life. These winds of change on marriage brought by Christianity resulted in the decline of traditional marital unions. Mbiti (1992:219) asserts that the aspects of marriage that have been affected by the social changes include political, cultural, social, economic and religious structures. According to Mbiti (1992:219) paradoxically, a person is involved in the change and yet also isolated from it. This implies that, one becomes a stranger to both traditional life and also to the new life which is brought about by the modern changes. As a result, “Africans also receive part of that culture and reject the other part of their traditional culture while retaining the other part” (Mbiti 1992:219). Africans are in this regard, caught between identities of being Euro-Africans since the Western cultures keep changing the underpinnings of their culture. This implies that Africans women are double oppressed in the institution of marriage because of such cultural entanglements (Mbiti 1992:219).

### **3.3 Marriage from the Jewish Cultural Perspective**

According to Jacobs (2011:9), in terms of Jewish culture, marriage is a prerequisite to life as a good Jew. During the period of Jesus, Jews had believed that the concept of marriage is the ideal. “He who dwells without a wife dwells without joy, without blessing, without good, without happiness” (Yev 2011:9). Furthermore, it is said “he who has no wife is less than a man” (Zwi Werbloesky & Wigoder 1997:443). Therefore, every man according to the Jewish culture, is expected to get married and have a wife. The Jewish concept of marriage shares similarities with the African understanding of marriage in that regard.

Moreover, most of what Jewish culture upholds regarding the institution of marriage is traced within the biblical text of the Old Testament. Whilst it has been argued by many Old Testament scholars that the biblical text does not necessarily hold a historical record of the Jews, it does

however give glimpses into the social structure and the ideologies thereof of the Jewish world. In the Bible, God is portrayed as the originator of human life and social culture by initiating the concept of marriage. It is said that after creating a man (Adam), God realised that it was “not good for man to be alone so He made a helper suitable for him” (Eve) (Genesis. 2:18, 20b-24) thereby instituting the marriage relationship. Femi Njie (1994:48) says that “God revealed that the goal for a husband and wife is to become one in all areas of their relationship-intellectually, emotionally and physically”. This Jewish ideology is synonymous to the Western ideology of marriage. Consequently, marriage can thus be defined as the covenant of companionship. This means that companionship, therefore, is the core of a marriage union.

According to the Bible, the marriage union was designed by God, and was further endorsed by Matthew (19:1-11) in his gospel when he pronounced that “What God has joined together, let no one separate”. Therefore, Matthew’s assertion suggests that marriage should be regarded as a permanent institution that needs to be enjoyed by both spouses and should not to be separated by humankind (Genesis, 2:24). Here it is observed that both the Old Testament and New Testament are in agreement with the fundamental ideology of marriage. However even though in agreement, the Old Testament leaders and the New Testament do not outlive the experience of marriage similarly, for example Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are different from the Greco-Roman world and its leaders.

However, divorce has become a major issue for both the church and societies, hence the Bible is silent on how it should be managed (Richards, 1991:232). When Jesus was questioned about divorce by the Pharisees, He stated that “what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6b; and Mark 10:9). According to Gaebelien and Polcyn (1985:717), this notion is also reinforced in the book of (Malachi 2:15), which indicates that God made monogamous marriage and intended unions to last; “Has not the Lord made them one?” (Malachi 2:15).

Matthew 19 highlights how Jesus managed the debate concerning marriage and divorce in (Matthew, 19:1-12). Jesus provided clarification regarding the misunderstanding and interpretation emanating from the institution of marriage and divorce. He was responding to the Jewish cultural pressures. His ministry was endorsed by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, where he emphasised for a marital covenant. Furthermore, Jesus made it clear that divorce, can only be legitimised on the condition of adulterious behavior (Pao 2004: 87). The author states that according to the society of Matthean, any unfaithful sexual activity taking place

outside the marriage is regarded as adultery. Therefore, *adultery* serves as a determinant for divorce, thus allowing the victim to file for divorce (Pao 2004: 28). Jesus taught that the victim is legitimised to remarry if he/she so desires so (Matthew, 19:9). For instance, Herodias divorced her husband Philip and married his brother, Herod Antipas thereafter (Ilan 1995:77; Richardson 2000 (cited in Grab 2011:11). According to Richardson (cited in Grab 2011: 11), John the Baptist condemned the divorce action of Herodias, which resulted in his beheading (Mark 6:17-20). Nonetheless, these above mentioned events did shock the entire Jewish community.

Furthermore, from the Pharisaical perspective, according to Instone-Brewer (2005:85) the grounds for legitimate divorce include the following:

- infertility
- unfaithfulness
- emotional neglect
- material neglect

Jews did not tolerate infertility as according to the Jewish belief system, procreation was the sole purpose marriage (Ilan 1995:108; Instone-Brewer 2005:85). Therefore, childlessness after ten years of marriage meant that a man could institute a divorce, as a barren woman was considered to be a sinner (Ilan 1995:111) and thereafter, he could remarry a fertile partner. In addition, (Exodus 21:10:11) provides the conditions for material and emotional neglect. This clause indicates that a Jewish husband must also provide food, clothing, and marital assets to his partner. Therefore, failure to provide such provokes the woman to leave the household without any penalty. This notion seems to maintain some form of equality for considering the womans needs.

However, in the Old Testaments marital perspective, a woman was not allowed to express her dissatisfaction regarding marriage in terms of the Jewish laws as she was regarded as a man's property (Ilan 1995:128). This was endorsed by Friedlander (1969 cited in Ilan 1995:128-129) who states that a woman must be kept indoors and made only for inside life. This implied that women were barred from initiating a divorce until Rabbenu Gershom fought on their behalf (Jacobs 1995:36).

The historical context of marriage and divorce can be described into two schools of thought, namely, the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel (Ilan 1995:93-94). As earlier indicated

Matthew (19:3-12) provided Jesus' exception clause on marriage and divorce when he was confronted by the Pharisees. Nonetheless, the former contend that legitimate divorce can only be instituted in a "matter of indecency" while the latter states that a man is allowed to seek a legitimate divorce "...even if she (the wife) spoiled his dish" (Bock & Gregory 2005:190). According to Ilan (1995:142), "the House of Shammai says that a man should divorce his wife only because he has grounds for it in unchastity." In this regard, it is adultery that can be legitimised as the ground for divorce. Adultery has been interpreted along (Exodus 21:10-11 and Deuteronomy 24:1). Therefore, this section contends that the book of Matthew was intended for the glimpse into the Jewish society.

### **3.4 Christian view on marriage: Roman Catholic Dogma**

The Roman Catholic Old Canon embraced both the primary and secondary purposes of a Christian marriage. The former focuses on the procreation and the education of children while the latter speaks about the mutual support and allaying of concupiscence (Oforchukwu 2010:56). However, this particular version has been replaced by the new canon which defines marriage as an "intimate partnership of the whole of life between a man and a woman which by its very nature is ordered to the procreation and education of children" (Oforchukwu 2010:56). However, several times Christian marriages are experiencing challenges that require pastoral care. Such challenges include marriages that are childless, adultery, dissatisfaction and many other marital issues. In this regard, the church has a critical role to play in alleviating problems. The Roman Catholic Church through the teachings of the Vatican II on Christian marriages, advocates for covenant marriage as a sacrament. According to above teachings, although there is an element of contract in a marriage, it must be viewed as a covenant which God intended from the beginning (Mbugua 1994:47).

Furthermore, marriage is made to signify the relationship between Christ and the church. Nonetheless, this resemblance entails the following characteristics (Oforchukwu 2010:58):

- marital love
- living together as a single household
- faithfulness to the marriage bed
- provision for the wife by the husband

- obedience to the husband by the wife

Accordingly, trust, fidelity and love are the cornerstones of marriage and consequently, marriage should bear unconditional permanent bonds. This notion primarily means that no partner is expected to violate the covenant of marriage. From the perspective of sacrament, Pope Leo XIII contended that marriage is a sacrament because of its holiness which infers grace (Oforchukwu 2010:59). Ultimately, through sacrament, a husband and wife get united and their unity is indissoluble. Therefore, a husband must love his wife unconditionally for the sake of Christ on one hand, while on the other, the wife must submit and respect her husband. Due to the nature of sacrament, marriage must be administered by a priest who becomes the representative of God and the Church (Hastings 1973: 9).

Furthermore, Paul's book in 1 Corinthians 7 reflects a strong Greco-Roman influence in a culture that had a myriad of gods (Garland 2012:48). The author maintains that this confused landscape of religion resulted in a marriage of Protestants and Christians, since the City of Corinth was dubbed as an affluent trading post that linked Rome to other provinces of the East (Garland 2012:48). The book of 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 states that many marriages broke as Protestants deserted their spouses to join the Christians, and according to the Roman law, "unilateral separation" was a normal practice in Greco-Roman society (Instone-Brewer 2005:190). This signifies that any partner has a right to leave the spouse and be granted a divorce without completing written divorce papers (Instone-Brewer 2005:190). Contrary to the Jewish culture which advocated that God created an institution of marriage for procreation purposes, Greco-Roman at the city of Corinth exercised casual divorce freely (Instone-Brewer 2005:190). Paradoxically, the previous passage indicated that according to Jewish culture, failure to get married was regarded as a sin, whereas at the city of Corinth it was considered as a mistake (Garland 2012:70). The author further points out that this is supported by Paul in his opening verse where he stated that "it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." (Garland 2012:71). Due to multiple beliefs and influences confronting Greco-Roman society, Christians at Corinth raised several questions to Paul regarding marriage and divorce. Paul responded with wise words taken from (1 Corinthians 7:10-16) further narrated below. He advised them that the grounds for legitimate divorce are found under the new law of Jesus Christ. With reference to the growing numbers of Protestants leaving their spouses to marry other people, Paul suggests that they reconciled and made peace with one another (1

Corinthians 7:10-14). Interestingly, the above views do show the rigidity of the ancient society towards marriage and separation from the spouse.

### **3.5 Divorce According to the Roman Catholic's Teachings**

Drawing on Oforchukwu (2010:61), the Catholic doctrine on divorce is summed up as follows:

- In a Christian marriage, absolute divorce is prohibited.
- A non-Christian marriage can be dissolved by absolute divorce based on circumstances that are beyond control in favor of the faith.
- A Christian marriage before consummation can be dissolved by solemn profession in a religious order, or by an act of papal authority.
- Separation from bed and board is allowed for various causes, especially in the case of adultery or a lapse into infidelity or heresy on the part of husband or wife.

Although modern day societies are experiencing different problems which may render their marriages obsolete, the church has never deviated from Jesus Christ's teachings concerning divorce. According to the Canon law, Paul the mouthpiece of the church and so, he, like Jesus Christ, condemned divorce as an act of immorality (Oforchukwu 2010:66). At the City of Corinth Paul highlighted to the marrying couples that: for the married I have something to say and this is not from me, but from the lord: a wife must not leave her husband or if she does leave him, she must either remain unmarried or else make it up with her husband – nor must a husband send his wife away (1 Corinthians, 7:10-11).

From the ancient period, the Roman Catholic Church maintained that divorce is not permitted among Christian spouses as they become one flesh (Oforchukwu 2010:61). Secular law and practice prescribe that only death can separate a bond between a husband and a wife, therefore no divorce and no remarriage can be prescribed (Lehmkuhl 2014:6). Since a Christian marriage is considered as sacred by the church, there is no individual on earth therefore who has the authority to dissolve the marriage contract. With reference to Oforchukwu (2010:62):

Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical Letter, *On Christian Marriage*, remarked that it should be known that no power could dissolve the bond of Christian marriage when it has been ratified and consummated. Those husbands and wives who attempt to dissolve the marriage or remarry prior to the death of the partner are guilty of a manifest crime. Furthermore, Pope Pius XI, as the Vicar of Christ, affirmed the stability of marriage. No one shall separate what God has joined together, and whoever sends his wife away and remarries commits adultery.

Oforchukwu (2010:61) believes that Pope Pius XI affirmed the indissolubility of the marriage contract when he quoted Mark saying that “what God has joined together let no man put asunder, and every one that put away his wife and married another committed adultery” (Mark 10:9-11).

Interestingly, the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church stated categorically that Christian spouses should remain intact in their marital contract (Oforchukwu 2010:61), even if they do not bear children, since marriage retains its sacredness. Using Jesus Christ to validate their claim, saying that he does not approve of divorce, so the church also condemns it (Lehmkuhl 1909:6).

### **3.6 Religion intersect with African cultural norms**

Isabel Phiri (2003:20) asserts that “issues of violence against women distorts the image of God in humanity, and therefore the church must be concerned with the way the image of God is being destroyed by this phenomena”. The fundamental premise of systems theory is that different types of complex systems – physical, biological, ecological, social, and so forth exhibit many structural and functional similarities. Whilst Africans had their own systems of oppression towards women that ensured male dominance, the Jewish and Christian system also brought its own element to ensure the validation of female oppression by extra patriarchal norms (Phiri 2003:20). Therefore, what we now have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the combination of male dominance as systems working together to ensure the subordination of women. Hence Phiri asserts that “the patriarchal structure of African cultures is reinforced by the Bible” (2003:20).

Furthermore, in a conducted study in Durban kwaZulu-Natal homes, when assessing why Christian women stayed in abusive marriages, this was done in conjunction to Carol Heggen study which also sought to understand “Why christian husbands abuse their christian wives”

(1996). According to the author, participants used in the study represented all races, and were chosen from various churches, eg Methodist, Apostolic Faith Mission, Apostolic church of Christ, Assemblies of God, International Assemblies of God, Presbyterian and Pentecostal churches (Heggen 1996:45). In this regard, one cannot claim that their church does not practice such or point to themselves as ideal than other churches.

During the study Phiri (2003:22) discovered four Christian beliefs that kept women from leaving or divorcing their husbands, namely: God has intended for men to dominate and women to submit. Secondly the belief that women are morally inferior to men and do not trust their own judgement. Third, the belief that suffering is the desirable quality for Christian and women in particular have been chosen to be suffering servants. Ultimately, the belief that all Christians are commanded by God to hurriedly forgive and be reconciled with all those who sin against them. Consequently, the study showed that all these beliefs are taken out of context especially when they are used to justify the abuse of women (2003:22). Initially, the abused women that were used in the study had found methods of involving church bodies to assist them in the gender based abuse they faced, and remarkably, they were advised to persevere and believe that God would transform the situation (Phiri 2003:22).

One could ask: What kind of belief in the African culture and Christian faith promote gender based violence?

Malinga quotes one African men admitting that from having paid lobola, it gives him the sense of ownership over his wife and she is his property because they can never be equals (Malinga 1997:8).

Therefore it is evident that Christian faith and African culture intersect with synonymous beliefs on the domination and objectification of women. Christian men claim that when the woman vowed "I do" that affirmed everything, because even when she does not feel physically well to sexually engage him, she ought to get into the mood due to her vows (Malinga 1997:8). Phiri deduces that another element that enbales this power imbalance is the fact that in many societies, men are older, educated than the women they marry (Phiri 2003:25). However, Phiri adds that even older and more educated women than their husbands, also face similar fate of abuse which means that there is no safe category for women to avoid being abused or violated by their husbands.

Phiri (2003:25) is right in asking the question above, because to every woman who has had to persevere under the abuse of a spouse especially when one is Christian, it seems like God is

part of the initiation. Moreover, through the stipulated beliefs above, divorce seems to be a no go zone because once one considers it, one has failed God and ostracism towards the woman who left will be the order. However, the author does envisage that change can be a reality if only there are conscientized male and female pastors and laity to lead the church in playing a supportive role to survivors of violence against women (2003:28).

### **3.7 Conclusion**

From the above explorations my intentions were to explore the Jewish and GrecoRoman cultural views on marriage. Interestingly, I discovered that even though these cultures are foreign to African cultural views on marriage, but they do share a whole lot in common. All three cultures hold different views on what marriage is and should be, however they all come together in agreeing that reproduction should be the mandate. Both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures agree that marriage is a sacred union that involves the divine, paradoxically in the Africa setting the sacred union involves the ancestors. Thirdly, it goes without saying, the level of intolerance African and the Jewish culture have for a childless marriage where divorce is the answer should there be a failure to reproduce. This notion does attribute blame towards the woman and does not leave room for infertile men to be judged as harshly as well. Nonetheless, the Jewish culture is seen in parallel to the Christian perspective regarding reasons of marital termination, however the significance of divorce is still negative. In the divorce action, there are power dynamics between the one divorcing the other. It is also observed as oppressive to those divorced without valid reasons. Ultimately, divorce is seen as an act of objectification and humiliation in different cultures. Interestingly, it seems that all three cultural contexts find methods to avoid it at all costs by advocating for a reconciliation.

Fascinatingly in the Christian context, whilst divorce may carry negative connotations due to the negative stigma attached to it; however, the one divorced may still return to their family or community. Whereas on the contrary, the Zulu women carries the negative stigma, and they cannot return back to their families because of the blood used in the ritual to diminish their familial connections, as well as the negative connotations derived from religion over the idea of divorce. This signifies that the ancestors that are involved in the rituals for sending her off need to be told that the marriage is terminated, so that a woman may be allowed to come back and be integrated to her familial ancestry once again.

The intersection of being a divorced African woman implies double stigma, double marginalization, double humiliation. Therefore, it seems befitting to use Christianity to correct the fate of the divorced African women.

## Chapter 4

### **African Feminist Theology as a Methodology of Critique for the Oppressive Gender Social Structures for Religion and Culture**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

A feminist theory within the paradigm of social constructionism is applied in this study to evaluate the above discussion. In chapter three it was discovered that the Jewish and Greco Roman cultural contexts problematise the African marital space with their patriarchal ideologies through religious institutions. To supplement this social construct, it has become necessary to explore feminist theory. Both feminist theory and post-modern feminism constructs explores women's issues as well as socio-cultural practices that are detrimental to women's dignity.

This chapter will explore, how both feminist theories and practical theology have the ability to expand people's understanding of human identity and community, thus opening up new possibilities for deeper insights of Christian theological tradition and its interpretation of divine grace (Jones 2000:2). Therefore, feminist theology provides information concerning the method that was used in undertaking this research as well as a justification for the use of this method.

#### **4.2 Definition of Feminism**

Feminist scholars do not usually agree on when the feminist movement originated, as some scholars have attempted to trace it as far back as the fifteenth century, when it started raising concerns about human rights (Francis Martin 1994:145).

According to Watts & Zimmerman (2002:1232), feminism is a global movement that seeks to resist all forms of gender-based violence whether sexually, culturally, socially, politically, economically, and or religiously. A feminist framework provides an understanding of human behavior in the social environment in the context of issues that affect women in contemporary society. Watts & Zimmerman (2002:1232) assert that:

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as...any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women.

Therefore, feminism can be understood as a social vision which is deeply embedded in women's experience of physical or sexual violence, as well as discrimination and oppression. It is a movement which seeks to liberate women from all forms of sexism. Most importantly, it is an academic method of analysis that is used in almost every discipline and a critical stance that challenges the patriarchal gender paradigms in different social settings (Clifford 2001:16-17). Chilisa & Ntseane (2010:617) believe that feminist theology plays a vital role in communities by resisting dominant power structures to develop processes of social justice as well as healing in the community. Hence, the authors define the activist feminist researcher as a "transformative healer" (Chilisa & Ntseane 2010:617). On the other hand, (Meyer-Wilmes & Riet Bons-Storm (1998:19) define both feminist and practical theology as "contextual theology" as they concern themselves with contextual issues of societies.

According to Miller-Mclemore & Gill-Austern (1999:78), feminist and womanist thought has the ability to expose the misogyny which is embedded in different traditions and institutions that have since characterised women as emotionally immature, morally and intellectually inferior as well as spiritually evil. Thus, feminism is viewed as "a worldview that values women and that confronts systematic injustices based on gender" (Chinn & Wheeler, 1985:74 cited in Lay & Daley, 2007:50). This implies that the feminist theology is about understanding women's issues from social, political, cultural, economic, religious and ethnic contexts. Therefore, it is suitable for this study which seeks to discover reasons behind the cultural practices that lead to ostracism of the divorced Zulu women. Jones (2000:3) maintains that feminist theories struggle against the oppression of women and further advocate for their liberation and empowerment. In addition, according to Meyer-Wilmes & Riet Bons-Storm (1998:20), "feminist theology is a theology which recognizes the patriarchy in religion, church and society, names it and strives to overcome it" (1998:20-21).

Therefore, the feminists consider that the above mentioned contexts such as culture and Christian faith have been instrumental in producing women's oppression that is grounded in gender relationships. The researcher believes that feminist and practical theologies are

appropriate and relevant for this ethnographic study, which attempts to discover and expose sexism as well as male dominance that is hidden within the traditional Zulu custom of ritual performances. In this regard, male dominance is exercised through ritualistic performances and symbols which continuously keep divorced women tied to the non-existent marriages, whilst on the other hand, men easily move on with their lives after divorce.

Human rights consciousness was further linked to theological reflection and spirituality, in a sense that it called for a reviewed conception of biblical language about God who is generally referred to as “He” which is the masculine gender (Francis Martin 1994:145). Consequently, the author says that this gives an impression that since God is male; all males should be treated and revered as God. Thus, the feminist theologian, Francis Martin (1994:164) argues that the first attempt then should be to diminish the biblical language, that of referring to God as “He”. She further suggests that this should be substituted by other gender-sensitive pronouns (Francis Martin 1994:164) which are inclusive and welcoming to all.

Inclusiveness is one of the characteristics of the justice of God which Jesus restored in his concern for those on the social margins (Kanyoro 2002:17). In this regard, “for feminine imagery of God to be possible, it is necessary to understand the root metaphor of Christianity as a relationship, rather than a state of affairs between God and human beings” (Njoroge & Dube 2001:149). This means that everyone must come to realise that the essence of Christian religion is compassion, and therefore it connotes themes of love and acceptance for humanity as well as the whole cosmos (Miller-McLemore 2012:104), which is the role that should be played by practical theology discipline. This notion “points to the need for more gender integration, not gender segregation” (Nkabala 2013:75). To imagine the Divine being as a male person reinforces masculinity, sexism as well as patriarchal exploitation within families, communities, church and the society (Meyer-Wilmes & Riet Bons-Storm 1998:9). As a result, this disempowers women in different levels of their lives. Moreover, all forms of violence against women are not only a manifestation of sex inequality, but also serve to maintain the unequal balance of power, not in the church only, but also within communities (Watts & Zimmerman 2002:1232).

Therefore, it is noteworthy that feminism finds the church responsible for accommodating hierarchical structures, and not questioning or correcting practices that continue to escalate inequality and disparity amongst its members, and the society at large. Hence, this study reflects on the struggles that many divorced Zulu women and even those who hold strong

religious values, go through. Instead of observing the plight of the women under investigation, and naming it for what it is; communities and the church isolate and ostracise them even more.

According to the feminist lens, this kind of treatment escalates the pain and suffering that women are already experiencing (Oduyoye 1990:44; Dube 2001:144). This study argues that since Zulu women are associated with greater oppression to their bodies and emotions through ritualistic performances and religion, consequently, they are less free to use their minds to think through problems affecting their daily lives in an objective manner after a failed marriage. The researcher believes that such cultural conduct has since resulted in divorced women becoming “unnamed, invisible, stereotyped and labelled” (Meyer-Wilmes & Riet Bons-Storm 1998:9). To make matters worse, the church also tends to regard divorce as an outward evidence of an inner character flaw (Havemann 1990:87). By so doing, it plays the role of justifying the status quo, which is that of supporting the existing social structures which keep on oppressing and suppressing women by misinterpreting the Holy Scriptures (Harrison 1979:191). The church continuously preaches the subjugation and submission of women (August 2010:83). Such androcentric interpretations are misleading, and therefore harmful to the true message of the gospel (Harrison 1979:191), as they unnecessarily escalate hostile attitudes towards women. The church leaders are constantly advocating for male dominance using the authority of the Scripture as a tool to perpetuate their agenda. Harrison (1979:154) argues that in this regard, “social structures are the patterned ways communities and groups relate to each other, it generates dynamics of power that shape our communal and personal identities, including our sense of self-worth and self-esteem”.

Within the Zulu cultural context, customarily, males are the custodians of culture and moral values. Male values are often exalted, whilst female values are undervalued (Kanyoro 2002:180). This indicates systematic sexism and masculinity which subsequently disempowers women as it makes them feel inferior, since the masculine gender is often given a higher social-status both in the family and in the community (Kanyoro 2002:180). Therefore, “masculinities are produced through a complex human interplay of male bodies, social structures, and social interactions” (Nkabala 2013:75). Ultimately, feminist theology attempts to challenge the socio-cultural and religious order of things, which then makes it suitable and relevant for this study. In this regard, it enables the study to analyse women’s every day experiences, particularly the women under investigation, from “multiple contexts and provided strategies for the amelioration of adverse conditions that affect their lives” (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000:1-4).

Valuing divorced Zulu women and their experiences through advocacy programs, may change societal perceptions in terms of rituals embedded in a cultural doctrine. These perceptions include patriarchy or male dominance, stereotyping and discrimination (Byrne & Carr 2000:44). From a perspective of historical context, Zulu women operate within an environment that represents social practices that are a “unique matrix of domination characterized by intersecting oppressions” (Collins 2000:23). Nevertheless, the challenge is that it is still not easy for women to open up and disclose their different experiences of socio-cultural and religious domination, either as victims or perpetrators (Kanyoro 2002 17).

#### **4.2.2 Development of Feminism**

As post-modernism has been linked with social constructionism in this study, it drew on the ideas of Foucault, De Beauvoir and Derrida who are the proponents of post-modern feminism (Meyer-Wilmes & Riet Bons-Storm 1998:11). They are critical of the societal structures and dominant forces that are embodied in the perception of patriarchy which often leads to oppression, stereotyping and discrimination. Kanyoro (2002:17) says that “for feminists, patriarchy does not mean the rule of the father, or the rule of males for that matter, but it carries with it connotations of an unjust hierarchical and dualistic ordering of life against women”. The dominant order includes historical structures of institutions wherein gender issues, socially constructed ideas and concepts using human language as well as through interaction occur (Byrne & Carr 2000:44-6). To achieve social consciousness, social change should be effected through the elimination of societal structures and dominant forces which are perceived as contributing to women’s oppression (Anderson and Cudd 2005:98). The belief of post-modern feminism lies in multiple truths, multiple roles and multiple realities (Olsen 1996:128) and therefore, the debate around the rituals for divorced Zulu women will be “susceptible to new interpretations” (Gouws 2017:37). Consistent with this belief system is social constructionism that held the view of multiple constructions of reality that men and women are created in the divine image of God (Thatcher 2011:19-20). Therefore, “any pattern of discrimination, domination, or oppression is contrary to God’s justice and sovereignty” (Kanyoro 2002:17).

This study attempts to propose an idea on how society should construct the concept of ritual for divorced Zulu women. Since the power of life is not controlling; it issues invitation and not ultimatums, thus, emphasis should be placed on the fact that socio-cultural as well as religious changes must be made. Moreover, the gospel message should be used as a tool to achieve the right relationship, and also affirm human dignity amongst everyone in the society regardless of their given gender or status (Harrison 1979:191). This implies that ritualistic changes should

be effected to accommodate the women under investigation and to assimilate them successfully back to their families, communities and the church.

### **4.2.3 African Feminist Perspectives**

#### **4.2.3.1 Mercy Amba Oduyoye**

Oduyoye is one of the acclaimed African feminist theologians who has written many books on issues affecting women in our African context. Born and bred in West Africa, Ghana, she has written about the challenges faced by women culturally, socially, politically, economically as well as religiously. Her work includes the book titled: “Who will roll the Stone Away?” and she also wrote, “Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy” (Clifford 2001:123). She is said to have many accolades under her belt, one of them being that of the first African woman to become a member of the World Council of Churches, Commission on Faith and Order (Clifford 2001:123). The author further states that Oduyoye has served as the WCC’s youth education secretary, deputy general secretary, and member of its Churches in Solidarity with women projects and is presently the elected president of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. Oduyoye (cited in Clifford 2001:122) when reflecting on God in Africa observes that “it is always not easy for African women to experience God as empowering and liberating in their churches, because male clergy presume to speak for God in exclusively male terms” (2001:122). The author further points out that this is evident regardless of the fact that in her native land which is Ghana, God is culturally referred to as “Nana” which can be understood to mean either “mother or father”. Clifford (2001:124) maintains that Oduyoye perceives Jesus as a friend and liberator who promotes the dignity of women. The researcher believes that these metaphors are significant for the divorced Zulu women who are constantly yearning for deliverance from stigma and social stereotypes.

#### **4.2.3.2 Musa Wenkosi Dube**

Dube is one of the well-known African feminist theologians who has written extensively about issues affecting women as well as misinterpretation of the Holy Scriptures which discriminate and undermine women. According to Pui-lan (2005:127), Dube perceives feminism as a liberation movement which is striving for human dignity, and she believes that her commitment to the feminist movement is a theological call for universal gender justice. When defining gender, Dube (2001:136) asserts that it is a set of behavioral, cultural, psychological, religious, social characteristics and practices that affirm and escalate male dominance and masculinity.

Therefore, she warns against these social inclinations by highlighting the fact that they are against the revelatory truths of the gospel which seek to embrace and empower everyone, regardless of their culture, class, race, gender and or religious affiliation. Among others, Dube's work includes; a "Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible" (2000), a "Reading of Semoya: Batswana Women's Interpretations of Matt. 15:21-28" as well as, "Intercultural Biblical Interpretations".

In her article titled: *Gender and the Bible in African Christianity*, Dube claims that gender is a critical social classification that systematises relationships which are responsible for the unfair distribution of power among individuals, within institutions as well as in all social relationships. The researcher perceives that also, within the Zulu context, notions of gender endorse social hierarchies that uphold and maintain social inequality. Dube says that "gender, more often than not, determines who has power to make decisions and to implement them; who has the right to speak and be heard; who has the right to own property and manage it; and who has the right to contest and hold public positions of leadership" (Dube 2001:144).

Moreover, when defining the term, patriarchy, Dube (2001:144) asserts that it is a system of unequal power distribution, where dominating men are given priority in relation to marginalised groups and not only women and children, but also homosexuals. Dube further points out that the biblical texts originate from various colonial contexts and patriarchal cultures, therefore patriarchy and imperialism is central to the biblical worldview (Dube 2001:144). She perceives this as the reason why it is manipulated and used to benefit the oppressors. Therefore, feminism aims at advocating for justice-seeking, peace-loving, and empowerment-dreaming, and it also aims at supporting those who preach salvation and seek deliverance for the oppressed (Dube 2001:146). The author believes that since African Christianity is an effective institution that is dominated by both females and males, (Dube 2001:146) it must heed the gospel message by preaching salvation, redemption, healing, deliverance and empowerment for all its members. Unless African Christianity fully examines and explores how gender affects its members and the structures of the African church, then its essential endeavor of bringing about salvation, redemption, healing and deliverance from negative powers, will not be fully realised by all of its members (Dube 2001:159). The aforementioned assertions highlight that it is imperative for gender-justice to be the basic message, so that programs and institutions of African churches for African Christianity can deliver liberating salvation to all its members in the communities that they are serving. In this regard, the researcher believes that this is the important message to be preached by the church,

as it strives to enforce the equality of all believers and ensure better treatment for the community members, including divorced women.

#### **4.2.3.4 Other Feminist Perspectives**

According to one of our South African feminist theologians, Denise Ackerman, “feminist theology takes special interest in the lives of women, their stories, their hopes, their beliefs, and their experiences of oppression and liberation” (Denise Ackerman cited in Phiri & Nadar 2004:225). However, Daniel Louw (2008:382) argues that feminist theology does not concern itself with women’s issues only. On the contrary, feminist perspectives demand a critical analysis of structures and ideologies that rank people as inferior or superior according to different traits of human nature (Louw 2008:382), whether gender, sexual orientation, class, color, age and or physical ability. This indicates that feminist theories advocate for social justice as well as liberation for all. Therefore, feminist theology takes contextual issues for all peoples and also women’s experiences of oppression and discrimination into consideration. However, it further extends its concern to “include all people who find themselves on the margins of our society who know the violating effects of discrimination” (Ackerman cited in Phiri & Nadar 2004:225).

On the one hand, Diako (2013:43) argues that “feminism in the South African context, has relied mainly on ideas generated by American or European models, thus neglecting specific cultural, socio-political and socio-economic contexts of South African women” (2013:43). On the other hand, Phiri (2004:16) points out that even though “African feminism and African theology both emerged from a movement of retaliation and resistance” however, it has also been acknowledged that feminism must be redefined in terms of the South African context, by focusing on the aspects such as culture and rituals that restrain women’s behavior and conduct, particularly divorced Zulu women (Phiri 2004:16). South African feminists contest that these aspects have contributed to the cultural oppression that women face daily (Kotzé 1994; Gouws 2017:58). In South Africa, particularly in traditional Zulu culture, men are accorded with dominance in society and in their marriages, and this dominance restrains women in performing a ritual after a failed marriage, to achieve sacredness. In the Zulu culture, even finding truth and validating it is firmly set by men including ritual performances and symbols. In accordance with Michael Foucault’s thinking, “the search for truth can be linked with the desire for power” (Meyer-Wilmes & Riet Bons-Storm 1998:11). Therefore, it is quite interesting that the closer one gets to the roots of discrimination against women, the more one encounter issues of power

and assumptions that must be spoken, so that changes must be made (Meyer-Wilmes & Riet Bons-Storm 1998:11).

The researcher argues that Zulu men often continue with their lives without disruption after a failed marriage, whilst women struggle to make ends meet, and also to acquire a positive self-image. This is culturally understood and accepted as a normal practice, which is challenged neither by the society nor by the church. Consequently, this results in psychological and emotional trauma in women, therefore signifying gender-based violence. Karkkainen (2013:322) describes violence as the “harm done to another human being, or group of people, or even the whole humanity, with evil intentions, or at least without thinking of the best of the other” (2013:322). Ilan (1995:143) states that even in Roman law, “a divorced woman may not marry again on her own initiative unless her former husband consents, whereas the husband had an option of marrying a second wife” (Ilan 1995:143). This indicates that in many cultures men are often accorded with more privileges than women. This practice is equal to sexism. Thatcher (2011:7) explains that “sexism is privileging of one sex and its interests over the other sex’s interests”. Such cultural practices are violating the rights of women and are degrading their status and make them feel inferior. However, Raymond Williams (cited in Bhavnani et al. 2003:146) rightly states that there is no society that is too poor to afford a right order of life. This means that to address this social norm, changes must be made socially, culturally, politically, economically and religiously by systematically applying feminist and practical theology of practices. “Theology that is explicitly ethical and contextual speaks from specific situations; names experiences, identifies suffering and articulates possibilities of hope and transformation, testing them within a given moral and ethical framework” (Ackerman cited in Phiri & Nadar 2004:227).

When taking a closer look at the basis of the nature of the cultural exclusion of divorced Zulu women, it becomes clear that it stems from the cultural practices and ritualistic performances which are designed to send women away when they get married. Paradoxically, there are no rituals that are designed to cleanse and purify them when their marriages fail. The researcher argues that cultural exclusion dehumanises the women in question, as it strips away their human identity and pride. The Zulu patriarchal structures have not yet come to realise that rituals must also have a form of reversal to accommodate and liberate divorced women from the clutches of a painful marriage. This discourse of change is inconsistent with the concept that culture is dynamic; it evolves and is not static (Hendriks 2004:137). The rejection by their families, communities and church, signifies that they do not belong any longer.

As it has been already indicated in the discussion above, meaning is constructed through interaction and consequently, behavior. This indicates that meaning has multiple constructions as everyone provides his/her similar experience. In this sense, rituals can be used again as tools that assist in the development and processing of meaning and to achieve acceptance and affirm belonging (Imber-Black 1989:148). The author insists that rituals are often used to symbolise membership as well as for distinction of who belongs, and to draw boundaries (Imber-Black 1989:148). Furthermore, rituals are also used as a form of healing in a sense that “in ritual, practitioners are able to secure divine intervention” (Turaki 1999:188). They also can be used as an expression of new birth (a ritual of imbeleko), as well as inclusion which occur in religious (baptism and Eucharist) and other cultural practices such as weddings (Louw 2008:184). According to the author, they can also be used for celebrations to symbolise family connections, warmth, comfort and support (Louw 2008:183).

### **4.3 Conclusion**

The preceding chapter presented the role which is played by feminist theories as well as practical theology discipline in addressing the contextual issues of women and of society at large. The definition, and the development of feminism was therefore investigated and also the role which is played by the contemporary African feminist theologians in their endeavor to fight social injustices, and gender-based violence. In this regard, a couple of them were clearly mentioned, which are Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musa Wenkosi Dube. Others were also mentioned and quoted in the citations. Feminist theologians express their different views on the impact of social injustices. However, they often come to the same understanding that for decades, patriarchy had and still is, playing a huge role in oppressing women whether socially, culturally, religiously, politically and economically, and therefore it is the major cause of social injustice.

## Chapter 5

### **Resurrection Theology as a Method for Resurrecting and Reintegrating Divorced Zulu Women**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The following chapter is going to discuss the concept of resurrection theology as a way of exploring how the women under investigation can be resurrected from their cultural “death”, and subsequently be integrated back into their communities. This chapter will be dealing with the concept of resurrection theology.

The research explored rituals as symbols of cultural coffins evoked by the marital kist carried at the wedding in chapter two. When defining a ritual, Turaki asserts that “a ritual is a formula for eliciting help from the spirit world and mastering nature to serve man’s purpose” (1999:188). With regards to traditional Zulu custom, usually when a woman gets married, she is given a precious wooden box known as a kist, and traditionally known as a marriage box or (*ibhokisi lomshado*). This kist is a traditional object that is used to symbolise a coffin in a wedding and marital context. The wedding may not even take place if the bride is not in possession of the kist as further elaborated on chapter two. This serves to show that “there are dominant cultural meanings that are associated with this particular symbol” (Wuthnow 1987:45).

The notion of a kist as a symbol of “death” is affirmed by the elderly people who explain to the bride that leaving her family for a marriage, could be perceived and understood as a symbol of “death”. Consequently, it is assumed and therefore believed that a woman will never come back to her original family, under any circumstances including whether dead or alive. Secondly, she is dying from her old identity from belonging to her clan to a new identity of being her husband’s bride and belonging to a new clan. Thus, the kist is used to underscore this notion. Subsequently, this suggests that even if a divorce could occur, one will not be welcomed and be accepted back by her initial (maiden) family. Hence, the researcher opted to employ the metaphor of referring to the wooden box or kist as a “cultural coffin” in this study. On the other hand, Maluleke & Nadar (2002:7) refer to the same cultural agreements as the “covenants of death”. According to the authors, this is due to the fact that “they describe an unspoken, unwritten but very real covenant between human societies and are therefore violent”. The

authors maintain that participants in the unwritten covenants with violence and silence normally involves church leaders, siblings and parents (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:7).

Having discussed the feminist and practical theological perspectives in the previous chapter which challenges the patriarchal oppression over women, the researcher shall now closely explore how pastoral care and counselling can build a bridge which could disempower the above-mentioned cultural symbol. Then as a result of this bridge, the women under investigation could be integrated back to their families, communities and the church, and also restore their human dignity and positive self-image, by employing the theological concept of resurrection. As has been discussed in chapter three, both cultural isiZulu and religious contexts show some similarities of oppression towards their divorced women.

Therefore, the theology of resurrection is relevant for this study in a sense that divorced Zulu women have been declared “culturally dead” through the performance of rituals, as well as magic recitation when they were getting married. The advice and counsel they receive from their parents and church leaders conote unwritten covenants of violence and silence as they were told to be tolerant and be submissive to their husbands, and to stick to their marital vows. Women are often told that they are the ones who need to be counselled so that they will be able to obey their husbands. Therefore, the researcher argues that these religious and cultural affirmations as well as traditional symbols justify and perpetuate violence against women, and they also keep them in bondage long after their marriages have ended. When explaining the unwritten covenant with violence and silence, Maluleke & Nadar (2002:7) say that “it is a deadly covenant cultivated and reinforced in attitudes, teachings, practices and rituals that tear human societies apart even as they promise to preserve and sustain”.

To demonstrate the unwritten covenant of violence and silence, in a blog that was posted on 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2014 at 5:07 pm, a woman by the name of Nombuso asked the following question:

After a failed marriage, and the bride chooses to get married again, what happens to the kist? Does she take that kist back home, or she leaves it behind with the in-laws<sup>3</sup>?

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<sup>3</sup> <http://enanda.co.za/2013/07/zulu-traditional-wedding-umabo/>

The answer to this question went as follows:

Well, according to the Zulu culture, a woman does not get divorced, as she has slaughtered and told the ancestors that, she is leaving her 'real' family to be united with her husband, his family and his ancestors. Thus, she is never ever expected to come back. This is an indication that in essence, she does not belong to her initial maiden family anymore. Even upon the death of her husband, culturally, she is expected to remain with her marital family. She identifies with them and their ancestors. "The kist is the symbol of your coffin, and your family is taking you out as if you were 'dead' to them" (which is actually a very harsh symbolism<sup>4</sup>). Therefore, if a marriage fails, and the woman happens to leave her in-laws, consequently, she loses a family. This means that, she cannot take her kist back to her pre-marital home, and any further discussions regarding her future plans are to be done with the family that she had been previously married to.

In accordance with the above assertions, it becomes clear that in a traditional Zulu custom a marriage is symbolically tantamount to a woman's death; "never to come back<sup>5</sup>". This particular kist is an object that is used as a cultural symbol to underscore this notion. Wuthnow (1987:45) writes that meanings that are aroused by symbols occur at the emotional level, volitional level and cognitive level, thus they often stay with the particular individuals forever. Furthermore, the author says that "a symbol provides a bridge between raw experience and some sense of a larger reality, but this sense may be felt, intuited, worshipped, held in awe, acted upon, hoped for, trusted in, or tacitly accepted as codified conceptually" (Wuthnow 1987:45). This statement indicates that traditional symbols have a long and lasting physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological effects on the individuals. Hence, there is great significance attached to the kist (*ibhokisi lomshado*), and the role it plays in a Zulu traditional marriage. The meaning which is attached to this cultural symbol keeps women stuck to their marriages even when the marriage is no longer conducive. Consequently, the failure of a marriage results in marginalization of the women as they are the ones who culturally made to carry their own "symbolic coffin" to their marriages. As a result, a woman is judged, condemned and perceived as someone who failed to meet the cultural expectations of holding

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<sup>4</sup> <http://enanda.co.za/2013/07/zulu-traditional-wedding-umabo/>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://enanda.co.za/2013/07/zulu-traditional-wedding-umabo/>

fast to her marriage, since perseverance is regarded as a cultural virtue. The family and community members, therefore, find reasons to abuse the victim for not fulfilling the cultural expectations of a wife” (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:9).

Moreover, a woman whose marriage has ended, is often perceived and often regarded as a failure who has lost her honour and pride. Another painful cultural misconception is that by being single and on her own, the woman is now a threat to the stability of the whole community as she is “out there” to snatch other people’s husbands (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:9). In this sense, Louw (2008:164) observes that “the tendency towards shame culture is the result of a communalistic understanding of society” (2008:164). As it is the case within the Zulu context, usually, harmony and acceptance indicate honour, which subsequently results in a good conscience. This is because marriage is regarded as a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate, including the extended family of the spirits through the performance of rituals (Mbiti 1975:131-132). Therefore, divorce is an antithesis of this traditional Zulu belief. Obviously, as seen in chapter 2, ridicule is often expected when someone has not met the prospects or expectations and norms of the group. As a result, when that person becomes exposed, he/she loses the status as well as honour, thus that particular individual can become completely marginalised (Louw 2008:164). In the case of a divorce, within both the Zulu and religious contexts the anger is usually directed at women who could not endure their marriage hardships, as had been expected by their parents and communities. Religiously, wives are expected to be submissive to their husbands as to the Lord, regardless of the kind of treatment they maybe subjected to (Ephesians 5:13).

According to Maluleke & Nadar (2002:9), this is a subtle form of gender-based violence which needs to be addressed one way or another. Thus, the study explores ethical and transformative ways of approaching this complexity of how divorced Zulu women can negotiate and resist patriarchal oppression. Furthermore, it seeks to investigate how these women can regain their identity, human dignity and pride to achieve their autonomy. Are there rituals or sacrifices that can redeem them, or which can resuscitate and reaffirm them as ‘living’ human beings again? Hence, the theological concept of resurrection is metaphorically employed in this study to bring about resistance that would point to a new form of a restitution and restoration. As Douglas (1966:96) points out, the theme of death and rebirth has symbolic functions in both religious and secular cultures. According to the traditional Christian belief system, believers die to their old lives or selves, by accepting Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and are reborn to a new life which is confirmed by a ritualistic practice of baptism (1 Peter 3:21; Titus 3:5). Whereas in

secular cultures, the notion of death and rebirth is exercised through different kinds of rites of passage such as circumcision and the like (Douglas 1966:96).

Furthermore, the traditional Zulu culture also practices the custom of bringing back a dead person's spirit (isiko lokubuyisa umuntu). This goes to show that in both Zulu culture and religion the notion of resuscitation is not a foreign concept for both worlds. However, the ritual of the Zulu's bringing a dead person's spirit from the dead is a ritualistic practice that assists in integrating the spirits that are believed to be lost and wandering, torn from familial ancestors and not connected to their living. As a result, the practice serves to unite a dead person's spirit with their rightful ancestral spirits, family and or rather a bringing them back home.

The concept of resurrection is further affirmed by Kariuki cited in Antonio (2006:119) who states that in essence, by the resurrection, "Christianity introduced a new concept of relations between the living and the dead". The doctrine of resurrection highlights the fact that death is not the end of human existence. On the contrary, it suggests that there is always hope for new things to happen; such as transformation and liberation (Kariuki cited in Antonio 2006:119). According to Augsburg (1986:223), in ancient China "the son was seen as the parent's means to salvation through ancestral worship. He was the bearer of family line and its continuity in immortality" (1986:223). This shares a close understanding with the Zulu culture's reverence of sons as well. However, in accordance with divorced women, the researcher believes that divorce cannot be deemed as the end for the women under investigation, since redemption through death and resurrection of Christ should offer them a new beginning. The following section will thus discuss the theological concept of resurrection as well as its relevance to this study.

## **5.2 The Theology of Resurrection**

Based on the literature review, resurrection theology stems from the insights gained from the different biblical narratives of the Old and New Testaments. Mostly, the narratives about resurrection centre on the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Lidija Novakovic (2016:28) brings another dimension to this general understanding by pointing out that even during the Old Testament times, the dying patriarchs had hope that they would rise again. The author cites that "the Testament of Judah and the Testament of Benjamin also mention the resurrection of other prominent figures from Israel's past: Enoch, Seth, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the brothers of a dying patriarch" (Novakovic 2016:28). Furthermore, these Testaments mention the resurrection of the righteous, and also those who died in sorrow and in poverty for the sake of the Lord, which then presumes the impartiality of this notion

(Novakovic 2016:28). In this sense, it can be said that resurrection theology brings about a reversal of fortunes where sorrow becomes joy, poverty becomes wealth and violent death becomes life. There is the idea that “resurrection does not romanticise stigmatization however, it displays God’s power as faithfulness within the value of physical life” (Louw 2008:100). Although the resurrection of the saints is symbolically used to point to reincarnation and eschatology (*perusia*), but through his actual resurrection, Jesus assumed and exercised the role of a mediator between God and humanity through the power of the Holy Spirit (Kariuki cited in Antonio 2006:119). This goes to show that resurrection brings about new life, and consequently revives hope as well as assurance to all those who believe in this historical event. It signifies that bad circumstances have the ability to change for the better, therefore bring forth new life changing opportunities and new life experiences.

In consistent with the above statements, according to the African thought, the ancestors also acquired their supernatural status after death (Nyamiti cited in Antonio 2006:120), thus assumed their role as mediators as well as intermediaries between the living and God. Furthermore, Nyamiti (1984:43) points out that “as an ancestral Mediator, Jesus’s crucifixion saved us in principle, from the tyranny of the law as well as from social and political oppression” (1984:43). In this regard, the researcher argues that by acknowledging this phenomenon, divorced women ought to be understood and affirmed as beneficiaries of the crucifixion legacy through their faith in Christ. They also deserve the same reversal of fortunes to liberate them from being socio-culturally, politically, economically, and religiously stigmatized. Barrett et al. (2003:422) rightly puts it, when he says that Jesus died for all our iniquities and thus reconciled humanity with God so subsequently, this suggests that we are all beneficiaries of his resurrection in different aspects of our human struggles. On the one hand, Louw (2008:439) asserts that the concept of resurrection points to the kind of “liberation which deals failure and sin from the perspective of salvation”. This signifies that the power of the cross which is often perceived and understood as the symbol of enmity, pain and suffering, becomes the symbol of salvation, reconciliation, restoration, and love. As a result, it holds the key for liberation of all those who are systematically, culturally and religiously bound, therefore marginalised, as it constantly points to the new hope that says the past has been dealt with by God through death and resurrection of Christ. On the other hand, Nyamiti (1984:43) contends that “for just as his death for our sins, Jesus redeemed us from the same sins, so also his crucifixion for political oppression and servitude of the law saved us from the same evils and other human injustices” (1984:43).

Therefore, there should be neither room for oppression from our cultural masters nor judgement and marginalisation of one by another, because men and women are equal before the eyes of God, regardless of their status and or religious affiliations. According to Gustavo Gutierrez, “Christ is a model in contemplating orthodoxy (right belief) with orthopraxis (right action) in rendering liberation to those persons that are oppressed, dehumanized and marginalized” (Kariuki cited in Antonio 2006:127).

Moreover, in the biblical passages of the New Testament, it is said that Jesus’ resurrection assumed the beginning of the universal resurrection of the dead, thus bringing about the hope of radical transformation to all the struggles and suffering of the believers and the whole cosmos. This subsequently indicates that “if Christ redeemed mankind from the burden of original sin by the sacrifice of his own life, we are driven to conclude that the sin was fundamentally murder” (Freud cited in Carter 2003:148). Hence the theology of resurrection. According to Louw (2008:100), “the theology of resurrection unmasks the pain and other human injustices of social marginalization” (2008:100). This notion is further expressed in the gospel of Matthew through an account of the resurrection of the saints who, subsequent to Jesus’s resurrection, came out of their tombs and appeared to the citizens of Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52-53). What is also noteworthy in this regard, is the fact that prior to his own actual death and resurrection, the gospels of (Matthew 4:23-25, Mark 5:42, Luke 8:40-46 and John 11:1-44) give detailed accounts of where Jesus performed different acts of physical, emotional and psychological healing of those who were sick, and or sometimes possessed by demonic or evil spirits. Therefore, these biblical passages give us the impression that firstly, resurrection theology brings about redemption and secondly, liberation from all kinds of struggles that seek to annihilate humanity as well as the entire God’s creation. In the book of (Luke 4:16-21), Jesus is presented and portrayed as the liberator of all things. This signifies that for the divorced women as well as the LGBTQI communities, stigma should therefore be transformed into what is called charisma (Louw 2008:439). The author suggests that this is the kind of understanding where the marginalised people “will be viewed from the perspective of spiritual realism, of the fruit of the Spirit, and not from the perspective of failure, stigma and sin” (2008:439).

A theology of resurrection basically means to come alive again. Abraham (2003:1) elaborates that the theology of resurrection denotes themes such as “revitalization, reformation, awakening, and revival” (2003:1). Moreover, it symbolises healing, new birth, new beginning, hope, restoration and wholeness. The author further argues that the theology of resurrection

can also mean “to make as good as new, to put new life and vigour into, and restore to the original condition” (Abraham 2003:2). This is the reason why it is relevant and significant for this study which seeks to instill hope in women under investigation, which seeks to restore their honour, their human dignity and pride. As Louw (2000:85) rightly puts it that “without the resurrection, God’s identification with human suffering would be meaningless, because the suffering on the cross becomes a source of hope for a suffering humanity” (2000:85). The resurrection of Jesus Christ marks the victory over all evil and human injustices, even that of patriarchal domination and oppression. For “when the cross is seen in the light of resurrection, both the cross and resurrection become the promised *eschaton* of a qualitative new future for the world in the midst of history” (Louw 2000:85).

Therefore, the theology of resurrection could assist in bringing divorced women back to their original state of being fully human and whole again. Divorced Zulu women will be adopting the positive “God-images of a parent, lover and a friend” (Louw 2008:93). This also points these women to the promises of God would never leave nor forsake them (Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua1:5; Hebrews 13:5), as opposed to the promises made by their exhusbands. God is the ever-present helper and provider especially during the times of rejection, isolation, loneliness, fear, anxiety as well as during the times when people encounter feelings of fear, guilt, shame and despair. Abraham (200:2) argues that schemes of renewal often reflect a particular analysis in which cultural, political, religious, and other factors play a crucial role. This implies that oppression, exploitation and exclusion of women covers as far as in the political realm and economic realm as well, in a sense that women are generally deprived of jobs, land and property. This situation could escalate after a bitter divorce, since the woman becomes exposed to all kinds of cultural and religious exploitation. This means that in patriarchal societies, “a woman’s identity comes through her relationship with men” (Augsburger 1986:216), be it her father, uncle, husband, minister or even her son.

The study seeks to highlight the fact that culture and religion often play a crucial role in the oppression as well the marginalisation of divorced women. Maluleke & Nadar (2002:9), assert that traditionally, the church assume that divorce is not permissible. Therefore, Accordingly, whoever engages in divorce would face the “wrath of God” somehow. Louw (2000:9) states that this notion subsequently identifies God with human misery, whilst at the same time, disregarding his transformative involvement and action. Maluleke & Nadar (2002:9) further maintain that this kind of belief and attitude is perpetuated by the fact that the Bible declares that “what God has put together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9).

According to this religious understanding, whoever gets separated or divorced is therefore guilty of committing a sin. Maluleke & Nadar (2002:9) point out that another factor to be considered in this regard is that both culture and religion hold the belief that “the man is the head of the family” therefore, he has the right to do as he pleases, whilst, on the other hand, the wife has to try and put up with his whims. In accordance with the above articulations, the researcher reckons that this could be the reason why men are not marginalised after a divorce. Since they are regarded as superior to women, thus they are deserving of better treatment. Consequently, a theology of resurrection in this study is metaphorically used as a tool which could facilitate the emancipation of women from their systematic, socio-cultural and religious exploitation. Furthermore, Louw (2008:100) elucidates that “resurrection embodied in a transfigured corporality in which the stigma of suffering becomes the symbol of life fulfilment, solidarity and meaning” (2008:100). The biblical texts therefore, declare that Jesus Christ conducted acts of healing to those who were sick, those who were believed to be ceremonially unclean (Matthew 4:23-25, Mark 7:31-36), and those who were culturally excluded and ostracised because of their gender (Mark 5:26-34). Another important account which given in the Bible is where it narrates Lazarus’s story. It is said that Jesus Christ resurrected Lazarus from the dead, four days after his death, and he had already been buried (John 11:1-44). As a result, the researcher argues that divorced women could also be resurrected from their cultural “death” and religious animosity, even after decades of its existence without being challenged. In the next section the researcher will be discussing the fear of impurity.

### **5.3 The Fear of Impurity**

The theory of purity and danger expresses something significant about marginality. Some African scholars claim that the theory of impurity or ritual uncleanness is highly regarded in most African societies as it was in other primitive cultures (Douglas 1966, Oduyoye and Kanyoro 1990:62). It is also noteworthy that fear of contamination of any kind, makes people paranoid, and therefore they may end up condemning and ostracizing others as a result thereof. Ilan (1995:103) cites that “in ancient Israel, the fear of impurity from menstrual blood accompanied a woman to the grave”. The author further states that even the corpse of a woman who died during the time when she was having her period, had to undergo a special ceremony of purificatory immersion (Ilan 1995:103). Apparently, this cultural practice was done on the basis of concern for the women’s honour.

Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1990:62) point out that according to the Jewish culture, among other things, the law also connected the flow of blood with sin and uncleanness as cited in the book

of (Leviticus 15:19-27). This meant that a woman with a continuous flow of blood was culturally subjected to different kinds of ostracism. According to the authors, “the woman was definitely bound by deep-rooted feelings of inferiority, fatalism, dirt, ignorance, and all other descriptions which dehumanized her, humiliated her and stamped her as a nobody” (1990:62). The authors further states that the only way for that particular woman to be purified and be accepted as whole again, was for her to undergo cleansing through certain rituals of purification, which sometimes included animal sacrifice (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1990:62). However, De Troyer et al. (2003:75) argues that “neither the rabbinic sages nor the Qumran lawyers saw women qua women as sources of pollution who threatened either the temple or the social order” (2003:75). This implies that some of the religious authorities, though patriarchal, took a stand against some of the familiar biblical traditions. They respected and appreciated women as proper human beings rather than objects of social disharmony. Whereas, Augsburger (1986:217) maintains that “the major world religions have, in practice, agreed on the subordination of the female”. He further argues that Judaism saw woman as instrumental and largely responsible for the fall of man, which is also the interpretation that is maintained and widely spread by Christianity and Islam alike (Augsburger 1986:217). The researcher argues that since cultural discrimination dehumanises divorced women, and renders them socially unclean, therefore, in the same manner, the concept of resurrection and subsequently, restitution and acceptance could be the ultimate solution to this age old dilemma of cultural exclusion.

Divorced women can also be resuscitated, redeemed and be purified by applying the Christian rituals such as prayer and the laying of hands, which are the means of asking for the divine intervention. Moreover, the animal sacrifices in this regard, could thus serve as the atonement to the angered ancestors, since the ancestors (*amadlozi*) are “understood as supernatural, spiritual, divine, or sacred and as the recipients during a sacrifice” (Carter 2003:4). Whereas at the same time, prayer is conceived as a process through which human beings explore and investigate the divine cosmos in their search for answers to their different life issues (Carter 2003:4). Therefore, the atoning sacrifice will remove the sin which is impending and threatening the stream of life, subsequently life’s power will be set in motion in favour of the person offering the sacrifice (van der Leeuw cited in Carter 2003:157). This could serve as the comprehensive and transformative approach which is designed to restore the honour of the divorced women. The Scripture in the book of (1 John 2:2) also teaches us that “Jesus is the atoning sacrifice of our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the world”. This

indicates that whatever sins that may have been committed, consciously or unconsciously, have been already paid for by the atoning work of Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection. Nevertheless, the sacrificial ceremony will ensure that the divorced women's emancipation is attained, and therefore they can regain their freedom as well as their self-esteem. According to Van der Leeuw (cited in Carter 2003:156), the sacrifice takes the place of the person who is offering it. This implies that also in the same manner, like Jesus Christ did for the sins of the world, the animal sacrifices could serve as the atonement on behalf of the women under investigation. Louw (2000:105) asserts that Christ substitutes in the place of those who are troubled and are suffering. Therefore, "the message of the atonement offers the sufferer the assurance that the last word has not been spoken by death and anxiety, but by redemption and liberation from death" (2002:105-6).

Furthermore, the biblical passage in the book of (Mark 5:42) gives an account of the story where Jesus Christ resurrected a young girl who had died by simply calling her back to life. Jesus commanded her that "Talitha Koum" which is translated as "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" (Mark 5:41). This indicates that in Israel, "the women were healed by a man, Jesus, of ill health and were restored back to life and society" (Njoroge & Dube 2001:3). This statement poses as a challenge to the role of the fathers and also the church leaders to come through for their own mothers, aunts, sisters and daughters. They should show up for those who are weak, and therefore are suffering under different kinds of social injustices. Instead of oppressing women, fathers and religious leaders are challenged to follow the example that was set by the Lord Jesus Christ as the King and the head of the church. They need to restore their mothers, sisters, and daughters back to life, even if it means making animal sacrifices where it is necessary, to promote a just and prosperous society. According to Carter (2003:4), sacrificial rituals is the point where men, gods and ancestors meet, and therefore empower them and sustain their human dignity. Furthermore, God presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood (Louw 2000:107) to establish and validate his justice for all humanity at the present time, regardless of their race, gender, class or social status. Therefore, "suffering as a theological theme, reveals significant theological dimensions of *theologia crucis* such as reconciliation (justification); representation (sacrifice); redemption/liberation; transformation; expiation/propitiation; pathos (the suffering and crucified God)" (Louw 2000:105).

As a result, when a divorce occurs, as a Zulu traditional belief, it is imperative that the father should intervene on behalf of his daughter and perform rituals of animal sacrifices to appease the angered ancestors. Washington 2010:26) indicated that healing among the Zulus center

around God who is the Supreme Being, as well as the ancestors who serve as connecting the people to the spiritual forces. A god or ancestor receives an offering made by human beings (Carter 2003:4). Therefore, the concept of resurrection theology and animal sacrifices can constitute the woman's cultural rebirth and restoration that would set her free from all kinds of discrimination. In addition, the church "should seriously avoid ideological captivity and entrapment in abstractions" (Dames 2009:86). Rather than watching in silence, or eventually taking part in any human suffering, it should be actively involved in trying to find amicable solutions, and also to pray for reconciliation between the divorcing couples and their families, to try and maintain peace and stability. Dames (2009:86) says that practical theology discipline also needs to do its work in two languages. Firstly, the language of prayer, praise and proclamation "behind the wall" which is the church, and secondly, "in the language of public discourse" where it encounters different kinds of cultural, political as well as socio-economic injustices (Dames 2009:86). The study argues that for the women under investigation to be regarded as socially clean and pure, it is necessary for both the church and the entire society to emphasise that even in an unavoidable divorce, God is the source of help and strength (Clard 1992:168), and that he is able to deal with any kind of crisis.

On the other hand, Ngubane (1977:181) believes that other than prayer and supplication, a trained counsellor, pastoral caregiver, or minister can be instrumental in the process of sorting through the women's feelings of guilt and shame that are imposed on them by their families and communities. Counselling sessions would assist the woman in starting the process of healing, as opposed to feelings of helplessness, and inability to cope due to threatening possibility of total loneliness (Louw 2013:2). According to the passage in the New Testament, Jesus as our Brother Ancestor, physically underwent the ritual of offering of the first born son (Luke 2:22-24).

Therefore, the researcher argues that to counteract the stigma that is attached to divorce, offerings and sacrifices could serve as the atonement on behalf of the daughter. This is because in accordance with the traditional Zulu beliefs, bad luck and misfortunes come as a result of the angered ancestors (*ulaka lwabaphansi*). Gwynne & Hicks (1994:268) assert that where witchcraft and sorcery is believed to exist, misfortunes are inevitable. Therefore, misfortunes take place not because people deserve them, and not just randomly, but because people "witches" (*abathakathi*) cause them to happen (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:268). However, when this happens, a ritual to ensure safety is always performed to counteract the bad luck. Gaarder (1991:21) points out that offerings and sacrifices were practiced even in the olden days. The

reason for these cultural practices was to make peace and to satisfy the gods that were unhappy and causing trouble within the communities (Gaarder 1991:21). Therefore, sacrifices were made to make things right. The author further suggests that offerings often came in the form of a cow, goat or in the rather extreme circumstances, they came in the form of human sacrifices (Gaarder 1991:21).

Moreover, within the Zulu context, it is also often believed that misfortunes might be an infliction from the devil, probably through witchcraft as it has been stated in the previous chapters. As a result, in dealing with the predicament of divorce as the root cause of stigma, the study suggests that it is also imperative to apply the traditional African methods of healing as well. Firstly, by consulting the diviners (*izangoma*) who would ascertain the course of the problem, followed by the consultation of witch doctors or herbalists (*izinyanga*) to cure whatever is causing this kind of misfortune. In addition to the above and most importantly, offerings and or sacrifices will consequently ensure that the woman is freed from rejection since “sacrifice bridges the gap and creates a relationship, just as gift-giving between humans establishes a bond of reciprocity” (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:264). Furthermore, she will be free from the fear of isolation as well as the fear of “being an instinctively despised marriage returnee (*Umabuy’ekendeni*)” (Maluleke & Nadar 2000:12). As a result, she would regain her liberation and consequently be integrated with her family and the community. Louw (2008:439) believes that this is the kind of liberation which can only be experienced through forgiveness and reconciliation. Ngubane (1977:319) suggests that it is also the mandate for the religious institutions and spiritual counsellors to actively and continuously fight painful and unkind labelling and lack of compassion towards those who are ostracised and suffering. This implies that all healing must primarily start from recognising the pain that the divorced women have already suffered, and subsequently be followed by proper cleansing as well as the continuous support from their families and communities respectively. However, it is unfortunate that some cultural rituals and symbols regarding the issue of marriage and divorce are perceived by the Christian church as somehow pagan (Ma Mpolo 1985:314). Whereas it is noteworthy that these phenomena have profound messages as they tell fundamental stories which disclose the manner of how Africans organise and conduct their human relations and their social institutions such as marriage and family life (Ma Mpolo 1985:314).

#### 5.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Traditional Ritual Performances

Based on the literature review, different scholars acknowledge that generally, African societies have more rituals for women than for men. Some scholars reckon that the reason for this practice might be that perhaps, men are reflecting their observation of the greater spiritual strength of women (Oduyoye and Kanyoro 1992:16). However, Augsburger (1986:224) suggests that regrettably, another reason could be that “the oppression of women is inextricably bound up with the world system of exploitation”. Wuthnow (1987:140-1) insists that generally, rituals have hidden meanings or psychological functions and therefore, some rituals benefit men more than women. In this sense, Augsburger (1986:225) says that rituals keep a woman:

obedient to the father and elder brother when young, to the husband when married, to the oldest son when widowed, and consequently, makes her know her place; to be silent and not bore others, to adorn the self for the pleasure of the male, and to perform household chores with diligence.

This therefore indicates that rituals can be both positive and negative (Durkheim cited in Antonio 2006:128). The positive effects could be that within the Zulu context, rituals such as tribal dances and weddings symbolise solidarity, bonding and inclusion which illustrates a sense of belonging and affirm kinship. In the church, rituals such as singing, praying, and sharing of the Eucharist, also symbolise inclusion and unity, which is a good thing. Therefore, in this sense, one could say rituals play the role of affirming kinship or communality. However, they can sometimes be used to suppress and subjugate women and children. This could attested to when young girls who are subjected to the pain of having their clitorises partially cut off (clitoridectomy) in the name of culture or religion<sup>6</sup>. Though there may be many reasons for conducting this kind of ritualistic practice, however, in some other cultures, it is believed that body mutilation “lessen the anger of the long-dead ancestors which are now appearing as ghosts” (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:333). Contrary to the above cultural beliefs, Louw (2008:100) says that “the resurrected Christ is the representative of those who struggle to maintain the integrity and dignity of their bodies in the face of physical suffering and physical mutilation of injustice and the rituals of bodily degradation”. As a cultural practice, and as a norm, in African

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<sup>6</sup> This particular practice of genital mutilation is not necessarily practiced in the Zulu cultural context, however it can be found in other African tribes.

cultures women are usually perceived as the “weak links” that must be protected to be controlled (Osiek 2008:326). However, the culture of neglecting women after divorce, and the continuous abuse of women and children during the time when they need protection the most, is quite antagonistic to this African traditional belief.

In agreement with the above statements, in Africa, culture readily supports the inequality between men and women. Culture often binds the woman to her father, and her sexuality is regarded as his property as from birth until she gets married (Osiek 2008:326). This notion is often underscored through ritualistic performances as the rites of passage, throughout the whole process of growing up until marriage. After getting married, she becomes the property of her husband entrusted to him by her father or other male family representative. Augsburger (1986:225) further observes that male-dominated institutions based on male-oriented values have been in existence through the centuries. These are deeply embedded in the socialisation patterns from childhood through the rites of passage of adolescence, approvals, rewards and punishments in almost all cultures (Augsburger 1986:225).

Ackermann (1993:22) concurs with the above assertions by avowing that “women are subjugated in patriarchal societies in a more total sense than either male children or male slaves”. Based on the above assertions, this suggests that when the time comes for a woman to get married, customarily, it is the duty of the bride’s father or other male representative to complete, or ritually round off, and approve of the union by providing the essential sacrificial animals which not only render his daughter fully married, but also guarantees her fertility (Osiek 2008:326). Sacrificial practices that revolve around kinship are a hierarchical social institution dominated by males, therefore it can also be said that sacrifice sets rank (Jay cited in Carter 2003:371). Where the father fails to provide such sacrificial animals, he is likely to be held responsible if his daughter suffers certain misfortunes, that is, if she does not conceive, miscarries, or if the babies sicken or die (Jay cited in Carter 2003:371). In such cases, it is usually believed that it is the father of the bride’s own ancestors who interfered with the girl’s fertility, and in which case, a sacrifice would be made as an atonement to plead for the good fortune. According to Carter (2003:307), sacrifice is often performed to chase away a threatening spirit.

These traditional beliefs and customs clearly influence and affect the Zulu marriage, since the ancestors (*amadlozi*) are very much an ongoing part of each and every family’s everyday life. Smith (cited in Carter 2003:40) maintains that sacrifice, in the form of offerings, was also the

earliest and most basic expression of human beings acting to fulfil the human psychological need to appease superhuman beings who stimulate fear. It is thus unfortunate that when it comes to the issue of divorce, this culture and responsibility of a father is completely ignored, and as a result, the woman is left to suffer on her own with her children. Consequently, becomes the social outcast. Instead of coming through for the daughter, the fear of impurity makes parents paranoid. This is the reason why some people may be pushed aside of societal margins without doing nothing morally wrong, (Douglas 1966:104), but because their status is considered to be obscure, and therefore a threat to the order of the community.

Regrettably, divorced Zulu women fall under the same fate. After divorce, they are treated as outsiders, and as though they have committed a crime or an unpardonable sin by their families, communities and the church. Whilst the sensible and ethical thing to do, is to welcome them back with compassion and love. The church is asked to be in solidarity with women because “in the body of Christ, the women members are in pain” (Oduyoye 1990:44). In the Zulu culture, women are marginalised and subjected to derogatory name calling. They are called *Umabuy'ekwendeni* or *uNtombifuthi*. These terms imply the one who married, but has been “discarded and therefore came back” or the one who has become a “virgin again”. Basically, such traditional stereotypes are caused by traditional beliefs which often suggest that women ought to stay in abusive marriages to honour their family and their clan names. Therefore, the ramifications for a separation, are such that women usually become tense, dispirited and painfully lonely. They are often overwhelmed with feelings of failure, inadequacy, and poor self-esteem, as they are neglected and left to experience the feelings of despair caused by the lack of support from families, which subsequently raises the question of belonging. According to Marshall (2002:362), de-individuation and ritual practice come together in terms of both cause and effect. The new name indicates the essence of disunity with the group and it comes with the loss of a sense of self, and self-doubt that may even result in alcohol or substance abuse, as a way of coping with stress.

Interestingly, “men’s incompetence may be blamed on ritual impurity occasioned by contact with women, women’s lack of sexual fidelity, or even women’s practice of witchcraft” (Oduyoye and Kanyoro 1992:16). In this regard, rituals of animal sacrifices will often suffice to restore him to good humour (Smith cited in Carter 2003:60), whereas there are no ritualistic sacrifices suggested for women after divorce which are culturally designed to restore them.

Wuthnow (1987:98) argues that “rituals not only become more meaningful in the face of moral uncertainties, they reinforce collective values and reaffirm the moral order”. On the contrary, sometimes they also become tools for cultural exclusion and contempt (Wuthnow 1987:98), of which is the case where the women under investigation are concerned. Karkkainen (2013:76) declares that “the African kinship leads to a relationship of strong solidarity not only horizontally among the living members”, but also vertically with those who have gone before us, who are the deceased members of the community, our forefathers (*obabamkhulu*). However, the general treatment of the divorced Zulu women seems to indicate otherwise. The misfortune of a divorce cuts them off and out of their family bonds, and they are left to suffer and struggle on their own with their children. This kind of cultural attitude is quite odd because the protective role of the father is of great importance within the Zulu context. Consequently, the victims often suffer physically emotionally, psychologically and spiritually where there are no support systems” (Phiri 2009:85).

Moreover, divorce could create great feelings of anxiety for children as well in a sense that instead of the love and protection that parents used to provide together as a couple, there is now a threat of instability and insecurity in the home due to unforeseen circumstances (Freud cited in Carter 2003:140). As for their mothers, the general assumption is that their image has been tainted, therefore considered to be ceremonially unclean and impure, although not clearly stated or articulated. Douglass (1966:3) says that according to some cultural beliefs, “only one sex is believed to be endangered by contact with the other, and those are usually males from females, however such patterns of sexual danger can be seen to express symmetry or hierarchy” (1966:3). This notion seems to suggest that the wellbeing and the dignity of males is the only significant mandate culture wishes to uphold. This is evident within the Zulu context since the cultural treatment of women after divorce seems to suggest that they are no longer fully human. Usually, it is often believed that the relationship between the male and female is by nature such that the male is superior to the female, therefore, the male is supposed to rule, and subsequently the female becomes the ruled. According to Louw (2000:9), “suffering becomes even more traumatic when one experiences isolation and rejection by our loved ones from whom one expects unconditional acceptance, support and understanding”. Whilst on the other hand, men continue to live as respectable members of the community who are loved and respected by their families and the community at large.

Based on literature review, ritual uncleanliness and or impurity is not something which is totally new and foreign, and which does not happen in other cultures. According to Chitando

& Chirongoma (2013:101), similar stereotypes and attitudes were also prevalent in ancient Israel as well. As a general practice, there were occasions when the law of purification deemed women unclean when they were menstruating or after childbirth (Leviticus 12). During this time, women were treated differently (Chitando & Chirongoma 2013:100-1). The authors insist that this kind of treatment was actually driven by the fear of impurity. As a result, women were barred from performing certain duties until certain rituals are performed to purify and cleanse them (Chitando & Chirongoma 2013:101). Therefore, discrimination and ostracism in any way, makes “the new world” look remarkably like what the old one had looked like, with institutional structures assuming oppressive, hierarchical forms over those who are vulnerable and defenceless (Purvis 1993:14).

The researcher argues that this scenario reflects a psychological torture which is tantamount to gender-based violence. According to Stephen Frosh (2002:28,) in the olden days classifying, labelling and or naming was most customarily done to slaves, prisoners, or traitors to show them as morally unclean or polluted persons. It is thus unfortunate that divorced women are experiencing the same kind of treatment from their families, friends and even faith communities. They are experiencing the same kind of treatment, cultural exclusion and classification, therefore treated like the “other”. The church seems to have forgotten its mandate as the community of interpretation in this regard. “A hermeneutical faith community interprets situations and its contemporary challenges in the light of God’s praxis” (Dames 2009:85). Faith communities should be preaching God’s love for all humanity, and for one another as Jesus commanded that “you must love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). Furthermore, Ackermann (1993:25) states that “active loving of self and neighbor is understood as the praxis of right relationship as well as the essence of justice-centered praxis, which is liberating and reflects the values of the reign of God” (1993:25). The researcher assumes and therefore argues that the marginalization and cultural stigma is the direct result of the systematic belief in ritual impurity and uncleanness. This could be therefore reversed, by making use of animal sacrifices and offerings so that the women under investigation regain their autonomy and pride. In this regard, Hendriks (2004:136) concludes by saying “water as a symbol of baptism, cleansing, ritual purification, wealth for the crops and the pleasing of the ancestors, is a basic requirement for any community to develop, mature and therefore flourish” (2004:136).

The next section will be discussing the traditional Zulu ritual of bringing back a dead person’s spirit.

#### **4.5 The Traditional Zulu Ritual of Bringing back a Dead Person's Spirit- (*Isiko lokubuyisa Umuntu*)**

This particular ritual does not mean people are brought into the living realm. Rather the spirit in this sense refers to the human soul (*umphefumulo*) being reunited with his ancestors, should his spirit be wondering elsewhere (Bergland 1976:84). (*Ukubuyisa*) means to bring back, whereas (*ukubuyisana*) can connote “reconciliation” in the same context. Initially, in a traditional Zulu culture, there are “death rituals to ensure the entry of the departed into the after world” (Gwynne & Hicks (1994:266-7), and at times the same practice could serve as the encouragement that they become involved with those who are still living. This traditional ritual is performed through slaughter of a certain animal which is believed that will enable the rite of passage. And it is traditionally known as work (*umsebenzi*) (Bergland 1976:220). Within the Zulu context, “the relationship that exist between the living members of a family and those who have died is a reciprocal one” (Tjale & de Villiers 2004:80). This means that in order for the departed to provide and protect the living members of their families, they also need be constantly acknowledged through ritualistic sacrifices. Therefore, (*ukubuyisa umuntu*) is a process whereby the family of a deceased person slaughter a goat or cow as a sacrifice, on behalf of a lost soul which keeps lingering. Customarily, within the Zulu context, it is always the responsibility of each and every family to remember its own ancestors until they fall into a state of obscurity (Tjale & de Villiers 2004:80). This is done to ensure that the souls of those who are departed are at peace, so that they can operate as good ancestors. Therefore, “while the ancestors enjoy the respect and honour of the living by being included and remembered in family functions and in decision-making processes, the living family members also rely on the ancestors for protection and prosperity” (Tjale & de Villiers 2004:80).

Accordingly, this ritualistic ceremony is conducted as an attempt to bring back the soul of that particular dead person who is believed to be lost somehow, is wondering about, and not yet in a state of peace or associated with other ancestral spirits (Bergland 1976:220). It is therefore assumed that his/her soul is not incorporated with its family or other family ancestral spirits. In this sense, a soul of a person is often believed to be lost in a situation where that particular person died of unnatural causes, unfortunate circumstances, or perhaps far away from their home (Bergland 1976:220). As a result, if his/her soul getting lost, it “might wonder forever between the worlds of the living and the dead” (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:263), and therefore will

keep causing trouble for its family or even the whole community. Thus, “a sacrifice has logic, as it both joins people together in community and separates them from defilement, disease, and other dangers” (Jay cited in Carter 2003:370).

As a result, in this context, a ritual of propitiation is intended to appease the dead person’s spirit who died in an upset and troubled state (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:266). A dead person’s spirit might have been appearing in the dreams of some family members, or showing her/himself through some out of the ordinary life occurrences (Spencer cited in Carter 2003:40). The author elaborates that these may also include bad events such as experiences of death as well as other forms of bad luck. Sometimes his /her soul returns as a ghost which shows itself amongst the community members (Spencer cited in Carter 2003:40). Therefore, the aforementioned occurrences call out for an explanation. The family will then be compelled to consult a diviner (*isangoma*) to interpret the strange incidences, and therefore give them guidance on which steps to be taken so that that particular person’s spirit finds peace (Louw 2008:169). Signs and symbols have power for the people of culture as they point to something which is more substantial and profound (Federschmidt & Louw 2015:177).

However, it is also noteworthy that as a norm, not all Africans believe in chances or coincidences (Dube cited in Antonio 2006:94-5). This means that Africans often search for the root causes of every event or explanation for their experiences (Louw 2008:169). For instance, according to African traditional beliefs, ill-health, bad luck and/or misfortune do not just happen. This means that they are believed to be a result of something which is more serious, and which needs urgent attention. As a result, by slaughtering and chanting of some incantations, the dead person’s soul finds peace and its way back home and gets settled with other ancestors (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:266-7). It is therefore believed that “once in the world of the dead, the soul has entered a place of abundance, where life is easy and souls spend their time singing and dancing” (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:266-7). Subsequently, they become good family guardians who also provide and ensure good health. Other than slaughtering, the process might also involve the use of some traditional herbs as well as the burning of incense (*impempe*) which is commonly done at ritual celebrations (Bergland 1976:114). Certain ritualisations of this nature “makes use of words in prayers, vows, recitations, speeches, songs and the like” (Bell (2009:112). Consequently, peace and harmony is achieved between the living and the dead, because in an African school of thought, restless ancestors are believed to be the source of many family, communal and social ills. However, only adult males- fathers, real and metaphorical- may perform this type of a sacrifice (Jay cited in Carter 2003:371).

Therefore, it becomes clear that in connection with ancestral anger, rituals are always executed to appease and atone the ancestors. This is a ritualistic practice of atonement, traditionally known as (*ukushweleza*) (Carter 2003:306). The researcher believes that this is something that should also be practiced when a divorce occurs to bring back peace and harmony between the divorcing couple, their families and their ancestors too. As it is a norm that “serious offences, particularly within the clan or against clan members, require ritual slaughter (*ukushweleza*) before the guilt is finally removed” (Bergland 1976:220). Divorce could be an indication that something must have gone wrong somewhere. Hyden & Brockmeier (2008:157) asserts that “the personal experience of the battered woman’s break-up constitutes a seemingly endless process characterized by undifferentiated fear that completely overwhelms her” (2008:157). Therefore, instead of judging and stereotyping the victims, families should seek ways of comprehensively addressing the problem. Bell (2009:111) indicates that “in ritual words themselves are deeds that accomplish things, therefore ritual communication is not just an alternative way of expressing something, but the expression of things that cannot be expressed in any other way” (2009:111). The researcher insists that this is exactly what the women under investigation need in order for them to be resurrected from their cultural death as well as the subsequent stigma. The cultural ritualistic practices will assist them to regain their self-identity as well as their human dignity. Moreover, in accordance with the African school of thought as well as traditional Christian beliefs “death is not seen as the end of life, neither is it conceived as a complete annihilation of a person” (Tjale & de Villiers 2004:82). But it is a transition to another transcendental state of life. The next section will be discussing divorce rituals.

## **5.6 Divorce Rituals**

Different scholars acknowledge the fact that rituals are a universal feature of social life. In both secular and sacred communities, rituals play a significant role in keeping those communities together. Tjale & de Villiers (2004:81) state that the performance of rituals plays a significant role in the life of both the individual, as well as the entire community. Rituals helps a person to move successfully through different stages of life as rites of passage. As a result, life-affirming rites are maintained by various social groups, and they often focus primarily on birth, puberty, marriage and death. Gwynne & Hicks (1994:263) point out that:

There are religious rituals to cleanse people from sin, for instance, confession in the Catholic Church, secular rituals to bring people together, political rituals

to sway public opinion, curing rituals to secure health, agricultural rituals, fertility and death rituals.

All these are designed to achieve environmental and human flourishing. However, there are no rituals that are designed to assist divorced women to pass through to another stage of their life. The general assumption is that “a break-up from a violent marriage is a single event, composing the demarcation line between the past evil-and the future good” (Hyden & Brockmeier 2008:157). This is not necessarily true. Women often end up living in a continuous state of oblivion after divorce. This is the part where pastoral care and counselling should be playing a crucial role because usually, “when marriages crumble, pastoral caregivers are eyewitnesses to these kind of destruction” (Miles 1999:76). It has been previously mentioned that divorce rates are presently higher in our African context compared to ancient times. This indicates that “nowadays one has more to do with marriage relations than with all other matters” (Oden cited in Miles 1999:76). Therefore, a need for transition rituals is identifiable as human societies are not static but dynamic. This also means that rituals and symbols must also be transformed and be more accommodative to all members of the community, and not just a selected few (Nwachuku 1994:68).

The study acknowledges that divorce is a huge and a devastating journey for divorcing couples, their children, friends, and families. And moving from one status to another often changes an individual’s place in society. Therefore, pastoral and practical theology disciplines have an important role to play in this regard. According to Miller-McLemore (2012:104), “although pastoral also refers to ministry in general, it is associated largely with the special activity of care and shepherding in the midst of daily life”. This means that pastoral care practitioners, as the public moral guides, should intervene in all spheres of life such as to assist in mending the broken relationships, and also to highlight the way forward for all the victims of a divorce. According to Louw (2008:184) “in an African approach, the notions of balance and peace are extremely important, thus rituals can play an important role to help restore balance and create integration” (2008:184). On the other hand, Gwynne & Hicks assert that “the separation stage conveys the idea of severance, from the old status, a theme communicated symbolically in action and words” (1994:264-5). During this time, the wedded couple assumes the status of being single and unattached, therefore they automatically find themselves in the stage of liminality which is a stage of “neither here nor there” position (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:266).

In other words, the divorcing couple now find themselves “half way- physically, psychologically, or both-between the status they occupied before the ritual (marriage) began, and the one they will at its end” (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:266). Therefore, the transition must then be made public in order for the divorcing couple to find closure in a dignified manner (Lukken 1995:417). According to Miller-McLemore (2012:104), this kind of process will unmask the mystery and other controversies surrounding their break-up and further prepare them for their soon approaching single status. Lukken believes that this public declaration will eventually ensure that the divorcing couple is accepted by everyone (Lukken 1995:417). Furthermore, the public pronouncement will guarantee that they are given physical and emotional support by their respective families, friends and communities. The author says that the secular transition ritual is embedded in the official pronouncement of the divorce as silence usually arouses public suspicion and unnecessary gossip (Lukken 1995:417-18).

At this stage, to perform this ritual, professional services from the church leaders or social work are usually recommended. The pastoral care counsellor should act as a performer of rituals (Louw 2008:185). According to Lukken (1995:417), the process could entail the writing of a farewell letter and or perhaps the throwing of a wedding ring into the sea. He says that this could be done in the presence of witnesses as one of the characteristics of the official pronouncement of the divorce (Lukken 1995:419).

Furthermore, since the church is meant to be the pioneer of reconciliation which stands as the symbol of peace and unity, it is therefore the duty of the ordained minister, pastor, or pastoral counsellor to assist in mending the broken relationships between divorced women, their families and their communities (Miller-McLemore 2012:104). This signifies that this sort of a ritual must be performed within the context of pastoral work, as churches do not have to perform pastoral tasks only if there is a wedding or death, but it is also their mandate to “produce a map of the desert and see how the way to the promised-land now can or must be travelled” (Lukken 1995:419). In addition, as a pastor represents God from a Christian standpoint, he/she can now declare the divorce as over, and obviously, this must be after weighing both the pros and cons of the marriage (Miles 1999:79). The pastor is the one who has the authority to publicly pronounce the ritual moment through prayer and rites of penance, forgiveness and new hope (Lukken 1995:21). However, the performance of this ritual depends on a particular circumstance.

In certain instances, a ritual meal involving a pastor and the children should be arranged. On an individual basis, Ramshaw (1987:102) proposes that writing a letter to friends and acquaintances as well as publicising on a Sunday announcement would be an ideal ritual moment. According to Ramshaw (1987:102), during the performance of the transition ritual, the children, pastor, representatives of the congregation, that is if circumstances permit, must be present to witness the closing off of a ritual that is past and opens up a new phase. The letter “could be read as a narrative of the first day in the couples’ new life, or as a middle part of something that could be called a ‘bridge-building’ break-up narrative, embracing the old life, but also the new life” (Hyden & Brockmeier 2008:161). However, the complications that accompany a transition ritual must be preceded by an intensive process of pastoral care and counselling, as it involves psychological as well emotional feelings. In this regard, “the pastor fulfils the role of a networker and a bridge builder in order to change the cause-and-effect approach into a purpose-and meaning-giving approach” (Louw 2008:181).

On completion of this process, a divorcee must enter an integration stage wherein the couple assumes a single again social status in a society (Ramshaw, 1987: 102). Subsequently, the couple could then make public appearances as a single and unattached with their heads held up high. “Described this way, the break-up experience does not leave much room for agony and pain, but only for joy and celebration of the new opportunities waiting to be staged” (Hyden & Brockmeier 2008:157). But the difficulty about the performance of this ritual is that the Roman Catholic Church pronounced that the divorce ritual is a sin, and therefore divorce per se should not be allowed as indicated in the book of Malachi 2:16 (Lukken 1995:28-30). The question remains unanswered though, what should be done if the marriage is found to be completely broken despite exerting efforts to address loopholes?

From a cultural discourse viewpoint, while the divorce process is still in the pipeline, a need for the transition ritual lies on the separation. Once the divorce is officially announced, the divorcee could then return to her maiden family (Lukken 1995:32). It is however, an open question whether a ritual will be performed as her old self was buried (section 4.1.1) when she married her husband. This simply meant that she was disconnected from her ancestral lineage to join her husband’s ancestral lineage. In Zulu life, divorce is never allowed or in existence because a special relationship between persons and spiritual powers (the living and the dead) was established, which was subsequently affirmed by slaughtering and the kist (*ibhokisi*) as a

cultural marriage symbol<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the woman is ritually bound to the family of her ex-husband. Hence, the evolution of rituals and culture was also to endorse the performance of a ritual for divorced women. This signifies that in accordance with the Zulu tradition, the father of the divorced woman should report to the ancestors that their daughter is back home after a failed marriage. Arguably, this should be done through the process of slaughtering and the burning of incense (*impepho*) (Bergland 1976:112-13). It can thus be noted that “the history of incense in the religion of Greece and Rome points the contrast between old thrift and new extravagance” (Tylor cited in Carter 2003:19). Also, the Zulus show that the burning of incense (*impepho*) together with fat of the slaughtered beast give the spirits of the dead people a sweet savor which compels them to release their anger, therefore forgive the sins that have been committed (Tylor cited in Carter 2003:19).

After the process has been finalised, the last stage of a rite of passage should be the woman’s incorporation with her family, the entire community, and the church. This integration “may be expressed by a meal or a dance in which the person for whom the ritual has been held rejoins society, but in a new role” (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:266). This kind of ritual will subsequently defuse the stigma levelled against the woman, and also disempower the trauma of divorce as it will ensure that the victims are accepted back and integrated into their communities. As part of the ritual, the divorcee should take responsibility to build her own house, and start her new, single family outside or away the family homestead with the support of both the family and the community (Lukken 1995:417). According to van Schalkwyk (2005:96), reconstructing the self for the divorced women suggests a new positioning, a new language, new memories, and a new sense of personhood that encounters the dominant discourses. At the same time, societies and the church should empower those who are stigmatised and marginalized by supporting them and addressing their concerns to boost their morale (van Schalkwyk 2005:96). This will subsequently assist in restoring their human dignity, and further assist in repairing the personal and social bonds of relationships, which already had been broken by the trauma of divorce as well as social alienation. The neighbour in need, is the only place where we find God in the world Dames (2009:82). This perception presents the church with a tremendous as well as incredible challenge, since it feels the need to denounce divorce and further takes part in the stigmatisation of divorced women. It is quite interesting that the church leaders continue to do

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<sup>7</sup> <http://enanda.co.za/2013/07/zulu-traditional-wedding-umabo/>.

so regardless of the biblical command that we must love our neighbours as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39). The next section will be discussing the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*.

## **5.7 The African philosophy of *Ubuntu*- Communal**

### **5.7.1 Definition and the Role of *Ubuntu***

Generally speaking, a person should be regarded as a relational as well as a social being acting within a cultural context. This perception is often emphasised and realised within an African context because from birth, says Louw (2008:180), an African is channelled and taught survival skills with the purpose of achieving a full and complete life through socialisation and high regard of others. Therefore, “since life is communal, the individual almost automatically becomes integrated into a network of mutual relations with the community” (Tjale & de Villiers 2004:81). Isolation, stereotyping and negative judgements by family members, and or cultural neglect of any kind is tantamount to a sin, which can be perceived as evil, because it disturbs the normal flow of life. Therefore, “in an African context, pastoral counselling must undergo a metamorphosis, as the community and network of relationships are in the centre and the individual periphery” (Louw 2008:180).

Isolation is the kind of prejudice that can have serious ramifications on the individuals or group concerned. Hence, the study argues that divorce has a serious impact on both women and their children. This is because divorce often pushes women away, and it eventually makes them sink to a low social class and cultural status. As a result, women often experience very low and sometimes a lack of income and poor housing facilities, after divorce. The subsequent loss of financial stability makes vulnerable and unable to take care of themselves and their children, which causes them a lot of pain and suffering. Tjale & de Villiers (2004:81) argue that “pain is often felt when relationships are disturbed or when problems are encountered in the socio-economic and political spheres”. This is in an indication that the love and support of family, friends and the entire community of believers is imperative during the stage of breaking up of a marriage. However, Hendriks (2004:147) points out that it is quite interesting that one of the significant characteristics of our African culture is defined by the concept of *Ubuntu*. The term *Ubuntu* comes from a classical isiZulu proverb which is translated as “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am” “umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu” (Mbiti 1980:56 cited in Augsburger 1986:82).

The term *ubuntu* affirms a common bond between all people including strangers, in terms of hospitality and sharing of resources with them. This refers to common space, meals, and even your drinking cup. From a theological point of view, *Ubuntu* can be linked to the parable of the “Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37). This means that *Ubuntu* requires the whole community to notice and pay attention to the sufferings of the “other” rather than ignoring them by looking away. Furthermore, *Ubuntu* signifies “vulnerability” which can be defined as the feeling of each other’s pain, but also to share in their joys. Augsburger (1986:27) says that such movement towards another, in both insight and feeling may be defined as sympathy, empathy or interpathy. This is an indication of the fact that my emotion is felt to be one with yours (Augsburger 1986:27). Furthermore, *Ubuntu* denotes and affirms a special kind oneness, solidarity as well as inclusion, therefore belonging, but mostly, it highlights the African notion of caring for another. As Augsburger (1986:82) rightly puts it that “the African tends to regard personal problems as group problems”. Therefore, this notion subsequently gives one the impression that “I am my brother’s keeper”, as it highlights and affirms the awareness for others, regardless of the kinship or relationship. According to Hendriks (2004:147), *Ubuntu* is the concept that highlights and upholds the collective solidarity of the people, and which can be explained by using the image of a hand. When explaining this metaphor, the author says that the thumb could represent respect (*ukuhlonipha or inhlonipho*), whilst the other fingers could be understood as representing other social values such as dignity, solidarity, compassion, and survival (Hendriks 2004:147).

Moreover, *Ubuntu* philosophy also embraces themes of love, support, hospitality, and caring for one another (Hendriks 2004:147). The researcher reckons that these are significant social moral and ethical values which should be held by both secular and sacred communities which could be used as a tool coming through for divorced women and their children. When defining ethics, Tjale & de Villiers (2004:10) contend that they are a set of moral principles or values, a theory or a system of moral values which include a declaration of what is wrong or right.

Augsburger (1986:82) says that “the African is fundamentally concerned with establishing good relations, not only with significant people here and now (empirical humans), but also with those who have vanished from mortal sight (transcendental) humans, and this is the basis of their ancestor worship”. This further indicates that caring for one another is naturally the life-blood of an African since “ancestor worship strengthens all family bonds by enabling the departed father to retain his role as a powerful leader of the group, therefore (spiritual force)” (Augsburger 1986:82). Theologically speaking, solidarity with those who are weak and are

suffering was created on the basis of Jesus Christ's Lordship. Louw (2000:165) writes that "the Holy Spirit enabled individuals to be incorporated in the community of believers whose purpose was to build up and encourage one another (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)". And the church's mission is also to be an 'abundant life center' which is liberating, empowering, and developing wholeness centered in the spirit (Clinebell cited in Burton 2004:6). Based on the above assertions, the researcher argues that since the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* is multidimensional in nature, it is therefore significant for this study which seeks encourage solidarity with those who are suffering, especially the divorced women.

The first dimension in this regard arises when African people start listening to the silent voices of women who are hurting and are troubled by the feelings of helplessness and a desire for protection in their communities. Consequently, they should come to their rescue and embrace them during their time of need. Embracing and supporting individuals who are going through crisis in life is the true African spirit and the realisation of the classical concept of *Ubuntu*, and "the basic philosophy of the African which is I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am" (Mbiti cited in Augsburger 1986:82). This means that *Ubuntu* holds the key towards the healing and restoration of the women in question, as well as the realisation of their human dignity through solidarity, and not exclusion. The second dimension is that communities and the church combine their resources to assist suffering women and children, "through a shared will and collaborative spirit" (Poovan et al. 2006:18). This means that they can start by listening and thus address the issues of women who are going through all kinds of social injustices, domestic abuse, divorced or widowed. This constitutes African lives, in both vertical and horizontal solidarity with others (Augsburger 1986:82). Vertically in a sense that the child, the parent, the grandparent and the ancestors are seen as a continuous generational unity (Augsburger 1986:82). And it should further be acknowledged that historically, Africans have always been able to survive extreme hardships through the same practice of coming together as one. This was exactly the same kind of solidarity that was attested even during the apartheid era. The other value which is closely related to the first ones and which can represent God's presence and his faithfulness best in an African context, is the notion that "God is our Companion and Partner for life" (Louw 2008:165).

The Zulu culture used to, and still upholds the *Ubuntu* philosophy in high regard. Even though it has been infiltrated and continuously being influenced by the "Western culture of individualism, competition and a mechanistic worldview" (Hendriks 2004:147). Different scholars still maintain that *Ubuntu* is a philosophy that many Africans observe and uphold, as

it emphasises the importance of relationships and caring for one another; the tribe mentality. On the other hand, the entire Western thought about human beings begins and ends with the individual (Augsburger 1986:80). According to Louw (2008:165), *Ubuntu* as the moral quality of a person is recognised by all Africans. Nyamiti (1984:45) writes that the notion of *Ubuntu* is consistent with the biblical teachings in a sense that “our Saviour (Jesus Christ) gave us an excellent example of Christian behaviour, which demands not only verbal opposition to evil, but even giving one’s own life for the sake of God’s justice and welfare of neighbour” (1984:45).

Unfortunately, in as much as the Zulu culture embraces the concept of *Ubuntu* as a way of living, and not just a philosophy, but it is harsh and judgmental towards the divorced women and treats them like outsiders. Nyaumwe & Mkabele (2007:152) say that “Ubuntu is premised on the reciprocal belief that an individual’s humanity is expressed through the personal relationships with others in a community and in turn, other people in that community recognize the individual’s humanity” (2007:152). Therefore, *Ubuntu* denotes inclusion and a generous way of living which underscores and accentuates the collective identity, solidarity, caring and sharing. Horizontally, this indicates that each person is related to others so closely that one has literally hundreds of fathers, mothers, brothers as well as sisters even though there is no biological association (Augsburger 1986:82). This is the reason why in a traditional Zulu custom, if the couple is experiencing marital problems, the first step for them to take is usually to consult both their respective parents, to seek for counsel that would assist in sorting out their differences. However, if that does not work out, the couple can continue approaching other relevant institutions such as the church, or eventually, the divorce courts.

Furthermore, *Ubuntu* symbolises the connection between the physical and the meta-physical world which signifies the importance of interpersonal relationships (Louw 2008:41). This notion suggests that the interpersonal power itself is understood and enacted within institutional, cultural, and theological contexts that shape us all including our environment. Since one of the outstanding aspects of Africans is their communal way of thinking and living; therefore harmony in the group is extremely important (Hendriks 2004:148).

Therefore, the classical philosophy of *Ubuntu* signifies a generous way of living and the radical presence of the other during the times of suffering and need. As a result, the Christian values of compassion, sympathy as well as empathy are highly regarded, and therefore embraced by the same concept (Augsburger 1986:82). In this manner, people can demonstrate high levels of

humanness and a communal way of living. According to Augsburg (1986:108), the proper way of living for any community is from “communal integrity to moral responsibility, to personal identity, to individual actions and transactions”. This means that even children have to be brought up by the whole village, in a sense that they would not go hungry in the absence of their divorced parents, but also reprimanding and admonishing a child would be the responsibility for all members in the community, regardless of their kinship. In this regard, the Zulu culture can also bring about social solidarity as well as the comforting sense to the individuals (divorced women), by stressing, the fact that they are also accepted members of a single social group (Gwynne & Hicks 1994:314). This could be the way of re-embracing this classical philosophy of *Ubuntu* and communality. Hence, the researcher argues that the constant discrimination and exclusion of the divorced women is not consistent with the traditional Zulu beliefs. Since it does not build communities but it disintegrates them. Stereotypes of all kinds destroys the unity and collapses the social fiber. This subsequently degenerates the whole community and the church. Marginalization is against the philosophy of *Ubuntu* and communality which the Zulus and other Africans live by. The Holy Bible also commands and sanctions all humanity to love one another (John 15:12, 1 Corinthians 13:13, 1 Peter 4:8). Therefore, naming and shaming divorced women should be understood as against the will of God and other Christian principles.

As it has been mentioned above, *Ubuntu* highlights the social interdependence and caring for one another within families, communities and the strangers. This means that “personhood is therefore linked to kinship, the extended family, the clan and tribe” (Louw 2008:41). Therefore, instead of naming and labelling divorced women and their children will never be a solution to this social dilemma. This social group need physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, moral and financial support from their families, community and the church. Krog (2008:212) explains that the proverb; “a person is a person through other persons” can be understood in two different ways. Firstly, it emphasises the theme of interconnectedness. Secondly, it gives the impression that this interconnectedness allows and supports the release of the full potential of the wholeness of both the community and individuals who constitute that community (Krog 2008:212). Therefore, *Ubuntu* espouses, and also enables the empowering of both the individuals and the community. The author further points out that the themes of interconnectedness and wholeness must not be understood as just theoretical concepts in this regard (Krog 2008:212) however, they must be perceived and understood in their deepest sense of mental and physical experience of the process of becoming. They must be understood in the

sense that everybody and everything is moving towards its fullest and its best. It is therefore something “which can only be reached through and with others, and it includes both the spiritual world of the ancestors as well as the whole cosmos (Krog 2008:212). And in this regard, “the influential definition of pastoral care as healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling, identifies the core elements which make good sense within the ‘shepherding’ model” (Moore 2002:16). This implies that pastoral care practitioners have the responsibility of looking after those who are suffering holistically as God’s representatives here on earth.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This chapter presented a theoretical background regarding the concept of resurrection theology in its endeavor to resuscitate the women under investigation back to life after divorce. The study seeks to find new ways of life-giving and of seeing these women as dignified human beings who deserve their community’s respect and acceptance. Based on the concept of ritual, the fear of impurity was extensively explored to interpret societal attitudes and norms to achieve reality. For example, ritual performances prior to Zulu women’s marriages heralded that upon getting married; they are presumed dead, and no longer have a place in their original family homes. The literature review thus discovered similar tendencies within Christian traditions, where ritual impurity and uncleanness are ceremonially used to keep people from taking part as full members of their respective communities. This cultural practice is quite odd considering the fact that “Jesus had table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, befriended women, the poor, as well as outcasts, and finally gave his life for both his friends and enemies” (Migliore 2004:327).

The study observes that usually, rules and regulations are often designed to isolate women, therefore create segregation within the body of Christ and further perpetuate gender-based violence. Thus, the researcher argues that they are detrimental to women’s health and their wellbeing. Inasmuch as it is true that marriages shape the behavior of the individuals in the society and consequently, their interaction. However, divorce has uprooted the foundation of such families. From an autonomous and independence viewpoint, the literature reflects that the social constructs, for instance, cultural as well as religious concepts should be reviewed to accommodate all members of the society. According to Marshall (2002:361), “ritual practices transform knowledge into belief and membership into belonging”. As the study encompasses divorced Zulu women who are aspiring to seek for secular transition ritual, the literature review

discovered that a collective stance must be adopted to allow these women to behave in an autonomous and independence manner. This means that the rituals should become a central part of divorce too, so that they give women greater satisfaction even after a failed marriage.

In addition, the study also discussed the philosophy of *Ubuntu* in order to invoke consciousness within societies, and to encourage social justice and communality. Therefore, it should be highly contextualised. Societies need transformation because obviously, a lot of values have been lost along the way due to the immorality that is going on in our communities and also the adoption and continuous influence of foreign cultures. Personhood or the fact of being human in our African setting, basically means “to exist” or “to be so” for the sake of one’s family, neighbour, community, the village, and the society at large (Mbiti 1980:57 cited in Augsburger 1986:82). Therefore, the classical philosophy of *Ubuntu* affirms the essence of who we are, firstly as humans, and secondly, as Africans. Being human in an African setting, implies that one is never alone but in constant communication and in communion with others and the environment; in permanent listening to the pulse of the world, and in close contact with the universe as a whole (Nyaumwe & Mkabele 2007:152). And to us as Christians, this is indeed the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ as he stated that “so in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). Migliore (2004:327) concludes by stating that “the life, ministry, death and resurrection of the incarnate Word of God are characterized by a radical inclusiveness”.

Therefore, the researcher believes that application of cultural and theological teachings on the concepts of marriage and divorce, requires a clear thinking in order to uproot misconstrued cultural and religious interpretations. In addition, it has also to take note that children are raised in these broken homes, which often affects their lives negatively forever. For that reason, it is important to ensure that the foundation of marriage is rooted in Christian values and principles that are enshrined in good communal and social ethics and morals. As a result, societies have the responsibility to adhere and uphold the cultural and ethical values such as *Ubuntu* which denotes “a strong sense of unity and liking for the group and its members, thus contributing directly to belonging” (Marshall 2002:362). Communities, including the church, must be careful of the problems that continue to break families emanating from hypocrisy that emphasises anti-social norms of behavior, such as the superiority of men above all God’s other creatures. This implies that awareness and advocacy programs must be developed to change the mindset that has destroyed God’s intention and his love for humanity. The following

chapter will be presenting the summary, conclusion as well as recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 6

### Concluding Remarks

#### 6.1 Introduction

Having presented the literature review on the theology of resurrection, the fear of impurity, advantages and disadvantages of traditional ritual performances, the traditional Zulu custom of bringing back a dead person's spirit, divorce rituals as well as the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* in the previous chapter, the researcher shall now present the summary and conclusion of the study. The study provided the reader with rich information for theology and culture. Therefore, the information could play a vital role in theological construction within Zulu culture by understanding the pros and cons of the traditional Zulu marriage and divorce. The findings of the research indicated that the performance of rituals such as the bride-wealth (*ilobolo*) as well as other traditional rituals, prior to a marriage union within the Zulu culture was, and still is highly regarded by both men and women alike. The insights gained from the qualitative data reveals that there are some negative attitudes that are now developing surrounding the issue of traditional Zulu rituals, regarding the traditional marriage. However, the majority still believe and maintain the assumption that these rituals hold the key to a successful and a long lasting marriage.

The study seeks to highlight the culture of using the kist, popularly known as a marriage box or (*ibhokisi*). In this regard, it is clear that (*ibhokisi*) as a cultural symbol for a marriage, eventually becomes a stumbling block that holds a woman in a non-existent marriage long after a marriage has officially ended. As a result, she often becomes disadvantaged and unable to move on with her life. Regrettably, the woman also usually becomes ostracised and marginalised even by her own family and the community at large. The church also seems to be oblivious and therefore indifferent to these socio-cultural norms. The painful part is that, the interpretations of sacred texts by the religious leaders, as well as certain themes and sections

in these sacred texts, tend to justify the violence that divorced women have already experienced (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:14).

Therefore, the study proposes that new cleansing rituals should be created. This means that there must be rituals which are clearly designed to set the divorced women free of shame and guilt. They should be made to counteract the fate that is brought by the traditional Zulu symbol of the *kist* (*ibhokisi*) as it denotes “death”. Furthermore, the study also seeks to encourage sympathy, empathy, compassion and acceptance within families, communities and the church for the divorced women and their children. The pastoral carer’s task in this regard, would then be to remind the church to remember what it stands for; a sign of unceasing and unconditional acceptance and forgiveness like our Lord Jesus Christ. This means that it has a mandate to first highlight the themes of love and forgiveness, and also to profess that Jesus is the one who first forgave and bore our sins. Couture & Hunter (1995:171) assert that “if pastoral representatives are to face the complexities of a postmodern world, they need a rich and multi-perspectival theological vantage point” (1995:171). This indicates that pastoral care and counselling must first acknowledge the significance of other cultural ways of healing because naturally, and with passion, “we seek the company of those who feel and think as we do” (Marshall 2002:362).

Customarily, Zulu people consult traditional healers such as diviners (*izangoma*) and the herbalists (*izinyanga*) for different situations and for addressing health issues in their lives and society. These sometimes includes making use of animal sacrifices and other offerings to appease the angered ancestors, whom are believed to be the main causes of misfortunes and bad luck either within families, clans or communities. They are believed to cause atrocities and havoc if they are ignored or dissatisfied about something (Ward cited in Federschmidt & Louw 2015:178). Therefore, cultural methods could still be useful in finding the solution to destruction of families subsequently, forgiveness and peace could be granted for all those who are involved.

The purpose of Chapter One was to introduce the research topic, and also to outline the various methodologies that the study was going to follow. The background of the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives as well as the research focus were discussed in order to give the reader a clear understanding of what was going to follow. Finally, the chapter also gave the chapter outline of the study.

In Chapter Two, the researcher explored the relationship between culture and theology. This was done in order to investigate how these two concepts are designed to interact theologically

with one another for the benefit human flourishing. Thatcher (2011:18) says that the person of Christ is portrayed as the Messiah for Jews and Gentile alike. And God gave humans physical, moral, social, as well as spiritual capabilities to create their own cultures (Samuel & Sugden 2003:91). This indicated that culture is not a sin, but a God given way of living. As a result, the researcher explored both the Jewish and the Zulu culture, in order to discover their views and beliefs about the institution of marriage and divorce. The study discovered that even though cultures are diverse and differ in their traditional practices and belief systems, but they generally concur that marriage is a gift from God that was intended to be a lasting union. However, the sin of dominance permeates culture, and subsequently interferes with God's plan of two people living together as one (Purvis 1993:57). Hence, societies, both secular and sacred ones, are now faced with the predicament of divorce. The author maintains that culture has lost its manifestations of power as life, more especially on the interpersonal level (Purvis 1993:57) and as a result, it has been characterised by control than life-giving power. Consequently, the institution of marriage is now "oiled by intricate set of cultural sayings, precepts, rituals, and practices" (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:13), which do not necessarily empower women, but are intended to keep them in subordination to men.

In Chapter Three, as an aspiring African biblical feminist scholar who lives in the postcolonial era, the study explored the feminist perspectives as well as the significance of practical theology in challenging the issues of culture of women abuse by the patriarchal structures in church and society. In this regard, feminist theorists appear to be fully aware of the plight and daily struggles of women in general, because of men (patriarchy) who make the rules in societies. Hence the socio-cultural and religious exclusion of women under investigation. Feminist theologians concluded by pointing out that oppression and gender-socialisation often results in women thinking that even God is part of the oppression and other kinds of women abuse somehow. This is because he is also portrayed as a "man". And generally, men use that to their advantage.

Therefore, feminist theologians name patriarchal hegemony as the main source of many social and other human injustices. Feminist biblical scholars point out that church doctrines are often used to condone the oppression of women, by constantly affirming that women should be submissive to men especially in marriages (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:11). Furthermore, they also observe that biblical texts are systematically misinterpreted to silence women, and subsequently this adds fuel to patriarchal exploitation of both women and children. According to Maluleke & Nadar (2002:11-12), religion and culture have constantly depicted men as the

heads of their families and the church, therefore they are superior. This means that “even if individual women may indeed turn their backs on religion and oppressive cultures in their individual capacities, they do not escape the effects and consequences of the same as members of society” (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:11).

According to the feminist scholars, men are often associated with the concept of God as the Father (Meyer-Wilmes & Riet Bons-Storm 1998:9, Martin 1994, Nkabala 2013). Therefore, this subsequently gives them the notion that they too must be feared and be highly esteemed the same way as God. However, “Jesus did not write a book which would have served forever as the unquestionable and ire-formable statement of the truth about God, on the contrary he formed a community of friends and shared life with them” (Newbiggin 1995:89 cited in Dames 2009:85). This indicates that scriptures can also be questionable, challenged and be subjected to critical analysis if stereotypes and controversies are detected. In this regard, Louw (2008:139) pointed out that religion and faith becomes sick because of its inflexible views with strong moralistic connotations which disregard and overlook human injustices. The study also discovered that feminist movements do not necessarily deal with issues affecting women only. On the contrary, they also resist against all social and other human injustices of pain and suffering. They further advocate for all who are kept in the societal margins whether politically, economically or otherwise. Therefore, it became clear that “feminism stands for a steady, systematic correction of an ancient and very damaging bias as well as crimes against humanity” (Midgley cited in Ackermann 2003:30).

In Chapter Four, the study employed and extensively discussed the concept of resurrection theology. The researcher opted for this theological concept because it brings about the reversal of fortunes as well as restoration of human dignity and pride. According to Porterfield (2005:8), images of resurrected bodies have always been understood to signify life after death, and therefore they bring hope that redemption is at hand. Among other things, the study discovered what Maluleke & Nadar call the “unholy trinity” (2002:14). According to the authors, this expression refers to “religion, culture, and the subsequent power of gender socialization” which are believed to be the main causes of violence against women (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:14). Customarily, Zulu women are declared “dead” when they get married as explained in the beginning of this chapter<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://enanda.co.za/2013/07/zulu-traditional-wedding-umabo/>.

Therefore, by using the concept of resurrection theology, the researcher seeks to highlight the fact that the women under investigation could also be metaphorically resuscitated from their cultural death. This could be done firstly, by welcoming them back into their families and the community with love and compassion. Religious leaders as God's representatives should remain impartial and not take sides when a divorce occurs. Secondly, divorced women should be embraced and be supported by showing them kindness as well as empowering them through different sustaining programs (Miles 1999:76). According to the author, this is the mandate and the call of the pastoral care practitioners. For the empowerment of the divorced women to be fully realised; societies need to do away with the tendency of neglecting and leaving them to suffer on their own with children (Ngubane 1977:68).

Instead, societies should come through for these women and help them to stand on their own again. Support in this regard means that divorced women must be taught communication skills, negotiation skills, assertiveness, decision-making strategies, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and life skills that would assist them with coping with the challenges of divorce (Ngubane 1977:68). This would then assist them to be able combat the negative perceptions levelled against them. And in this manner, divorced women will be resurrected and come alive again and become full and active members of their respective communities, and not just "ghosts". Also, followers of Jesus understood the development of close communities as manifestations of Christ's healing power throughout his ministry, death and resurrection (Porterfield 2005:6). After his resurrection, Christians continued to relive different kinds of cultural isolation as well as religious exclusion as they themselves "expelled enmity and created familial love as expressions of the healing power of the resurrected Christ" (Porterfield 2005:6). Therefore, it can be said that love cuts across religious, ethnic, national and other familial divides (Galatians 6:10).

Furthermore, the study also explored the traditional Zulu customs and practices that are culturally designed to bring back and reunite the lost souls of the departed with their families and other ancestors. This was done as an attempt to come up with a comprehensive and a holistic approach to fight against the cultural exclusion of women after divorce. In this regard, the findings of the study revealed that the Zulu culture still held its classical traditional beliefs of accepting and embracing everyone, including those who are departed (*abangasekho or amadlozi*). This subsequently highlighted that the cultural exclusion of the divorced women should be perceived as against the traditional Zulu beliefs and customs. Thus it cannot be accepted as ethical or normal.

As a way of addressing the issue of the divorced women, the Zulu culture needs to come up with new rituals and symbols that are designed to integrate and express new meaning and hope for the marginalized groups in society. Rituals are textbooks of culture since they signify belonging and affirm inclusion as well as communality (Hendriks 2004:137). Consequently, divorce rituals were investigated and were put in place. The researcher then followed up by exploring the classical philosophy of *Ubuntu* and communality in this chapter. This was done as a moral and ethical reflection on the traditional Zulu culture as well as the spirit of Africanism. The researcher reckons that the universal and ethical principles are imperative in this regard, as they allow communities to review and assess their current practices and social norms against other common ethical values. The concept of *Ubuntu* revealed that the socio-cultural and religious tendencies of stereotyping the other, is life-denying, and therefore cannot be embraced. *Ubuntu* signifies solidarity with the poor and those who are suffering. Moreover, from a theological point of view, it is often pointed out that “in God, persons are relational realities, and are defined by inter-subjectivity, shared consciousness, faithful relationships, and the mutual giving and receiving of love” (Migliore 2004:77). Therefore, it is vital for family members, communities and the church to observe and reflect whether they do regard the moral worth of others as equal to their own.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

The findings of the study revealed that divorced Zulu women often find that they belong to their culture, but are also rejected by it. Being in a postcolonial context has taught them to end the cycle of multiple abuse. First by their ex-partners, then divorce, and later by their communities and the church which often judge and discriminate against them. However, culture still demands that a woman should rather stay in an abusive marriage because for one; her return is understood and perceived as a disgrace and a dishonour to the father, the family and the entire community. Secondly, the issue of rituals which are performed during their marital send-off cannot be reversed, instead they become stumbling blocks for them, when they try to regain their autonomy. Therefore, social relationships become strained and severed as the social status of these women changes dramatically after divorce.

This means that women often become unwanted bodies who have lost their identities and positive self-images after divorce. Their “personal identity often becomes intimately tied to the pain, uncertainty, and stigma that comes with an afflicted body” (Hyden & Brockmeier

2008:73). Afflicted in a sense that they were physically, financially, psychologically and emotionally abused by their exes. Therefore, marital adjustment also seriously affects them in a number of ways, for example, struggling to raise their children, as the mothers are usually left with no other source of income. Even if they do have financial means, divorce still affects relationships with friends, families and the entire community, adversely. This puts them in a difficult position because basically, according to the traditional Zulu culture, these people form part of the family structure. Subsequently, this means that everyone is affected directly or indirectly. Worst part of it is the fact that women often become social outcasts who end up carrying the stigma with their marriage boxes tying them to their non-existent marriages, whilst at the same time, they are struggling to heal and move on with their lives. According to Stulman & Kim (2010:54),

As opposed to psychological or physical trauma, which involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual, cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion.

Consequently, women become incapable of gaining their independence and self-sufficiency, since outside of the legal processes they have no support structure. As society often abandons them and makes them feel worthless. Divorced women are usually left to figure matters out therefore, find out the meaning of their newly acquired status on their own. They do this as they attempt to understand the concept of divorce, and its subsequent impact on their social relationships. Migliore (2004:18) assert that they often become “the outcasts, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed and the reviled”. The researcher argues that the subsequent hostile treatment and attitude against divorced Zulu women could be the direct result of the honour and shame culture which is pervasive within the Zulu culture. The words which are often stressed and used to psychologically manipulate her into submission is that the family will be “proud” of her endurance or perseverance (*bekezela*) in her marriage. It is said that her parents and clan will uphold a good name based on her submission. This means that culture determines people’s expectations (Tjale & de Villiers 2004:237), however, this could be understood as an emotional blackmail and also psychological trap. These isiZulu traditional expectations are unfair as eventually they become detrimental to women’s health. Notably, when a divorce occurs, women often suffer physically, emotionally, psychologically and

spiritually, because they usually have no one to turn to. In this regard, Tjale & de Villiers (2004:237) protests by saying that it is true that “while some cultural practices contribute towards improved health, others may result in the development of health problems”. Therefore, they should be practised with sensitivity and caution.

As has been mentioned in the previous chapters, the traditional Zulu culture engages in ritualistic practices that are designed to give women away to marriages. These ritualistic practices do not leave a space for a divorce or other unforeseen future marital mishaps. The idea which is usually affirmed is that the woman is expected to go and endure (*bekezelela*) whatever comes her way in a marriage. This means that whether her husband cheats or beats her up, she is expected to submit and never to come back under any circumstances. In other words, she is expected to leave and die in her marital home (*uyofela emendweni*). This notion gives idea that the woman would be perceived as a heroine who is able to withstand her marital difficulties (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:12). Therefore, when these cultural expectations are not met, women often become social outcasts, as they are perceived as failures who could not hold on to their marriages. This signifies that masculinity and patriarchal exploitation is at play. Fathers as of the families or other male family members are the ones who perform cultural rituals for their women family members when they are getting married. The rituals include the *kist*; popularly known as a marriage box (*ibhokisi lomshado*). The *kist* is therefore used as a cultural symbol that denotes ‘death’, which subsequently signifies that a woman would be leaving permanently. Notably, “the cultural force of the covenant of death that conspires against women starts long before marriage and extends far beyond it, following- if not driving- many women to their graves” (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:12).

As a result, the study seeks to highlight the fact that divorce is an unrecognised, unmarked rite of passage which challenges and threatens social order. Divorce is usually accompanied by feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and disorientation for women. It is health hazard which could be associated with psychological trauma and stress because of the disillusion and existential frustration due to unfulfilled expectations of life (Louw 2008:194). It is a huge step and a remarkable transition for both women and their children, in a sense that what used to be the valued family relations of father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, aunts, uncles and cousins by marriage, suddenly becomes detached and disconnected after divorce. “Friends no longer come around, while others don’t know what to say” (Louw 2008:342). The woman is now surrounded by firstly, feelings of uncertainty of the future, and secondly, the unstable relationships that are increasingly becoming her daily reality, as divorce becomes a more

commonplace for her. Other than that, the issue of social stigma and ostracism comes with her newly acquired status. However, a sensitive pastoral care practitioner should spend much time with the divorcing couple, and especially a woman and her children, since this becomes quite daunting and scary for them. “This implies that consolation and comfort in pastoral care are linked to God’s presence and faithfulness” (Louw 2008:346). The church must become a place where unconditional love and acceptance should be practiced and realised (Porterfield 2005:17). The author concludes by pointing out that “religion involves cultural attitudes and behaviours that define a person’s outlook and participation in the world” (2005:17).

Furthermore, within a Zulu context, a person is known and characterised by his/her own group, and not by an individual name. Therefore, it is expected that “the ethic of fit brings together anxiety about exclusion, inclusion, shame, reproach and guilt from failure of responsibility” (Augsburger 1986:83). This means that the love and support from friends and families as well as faith communities, is imperative during this time in a divorced woman’s life, because it could provide her with that much-needed sense of belonging and stability. From a theological point of view, “the presence of another in the experience of suffering is a gift, but the presence of the compassionate God in the experience of suffering is a gift precious beyond words” (Migliore 2004:134). This is the scriptural revelation that makes sense only if it speaks and attends to particular human situations of loss and therefore suffering.

The study is about the emancipation of divorced Zulu women. It is advocating for transformation within the Zulu culture. Therefore, it is aimed at proposing that societies, especially the traditional Zulu culture, need to construct new rituals (rite of passage). These rituals would redefine the women’s social status, and further re-establish their communal and social relationships. They should be designed to alter social norms of behaviour as well. These should also entail the social context for understanding and facilitating, and or may be celebrating, the divorce transition. In this regard, and most importantly, the aim is to devise cultural and theological strategies that will address the issue of stigmatising divorced women, by unmasking its heretical nature as well as its inherent injustice (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:15). In order for the social exclusion of women to be properly addressed, both traditional as well church leaders such as ministers, pastors, deacons and elders must held be accountable. In this regard, pastors should communicate the human dimension of the gospel by being the symbols

of personal attention and the unique value of human life, countering the cultural symbols of uselessness (Louw 2008:345).

Moreover, divorced women must be given time and space to tell their stories about their traumatic experiences of rejection. Hyden & Brockmeier (2008:73) cite that “stories, told or acted, offer healing possibilities that reach far beyond the purview of the biomedicine”. According to the authors, stories can help transform identity, interpret the meaning of the past and even provide images of possible futures (Hyden & Brockmeier 2008:73). Subsequently, women and their children must be engaged in psychological and spiritual counselling as they go through intricate emotions as well as the journey of searching for meaning (Phiri 2009:60). On the other hand, “asking questions is part of what it means to be human” (Migliore 2004:190). This means that by telling their stories of cultural and religious abuse as well as social exploitation will help assist divorced women to unpack what has transpired to them. A pastoral counsellor will help them to ask questions and come to their conclusions. This will subsequently assist them to gain clarity of what is presently transpiring in their new position, as they are single again. By telling others what has happened to them, the story teller as a primary source and as a witness to systematic suffering, also tells him/herself the details of his/her circumstances (Hyden & Brockmeier 2008:122). Thus, the whole process itself becomes an interpretation which makes the narrators becomes able to know their own experience in a new way (Hyden & Brockmeier 2008:122).

Moreover, the liberation movements of women have made the pastoral care and counselling movement aware of the debilitating effects of sexism, racism, and classism (Couture & Hunter 1995:198). Pastoral care practitioners have a task to enter into dialogue with proper community structures, which are the custodians of culture. They need to challenge cultural and religious norms of behaviour which are insensitive and inhumane (Couture & Hunter 1995:198). This means that they are mandated to question attitudes that undermine human dignity, and also to ask questions about the value of human life. This kind of engagement could be the transforming agent that divorced women need to get justice, and therefore re-establish their positive self-image, self-identity and self-worth. Furthermore, for the Christian community, the strategies and structures of restitution must include counter-acting both the systematic “abuse and use of the Bible and other Christian teachings and practices in justifying and perpetuating the oppression of women” (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:15-16). It is also vital to emphasise the fact that divorced women need the community that is inviting, and that which constantly recognises that they too are human, who are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), regardless of

the different social statuses or class. This notion testifies to biblical sacred texts which declare that the free grace of God does not discriminate, but it is inviting and also radically inclusive (Migliore 2004:327). This is the transforming practice which can help the congregation and the society to move beyond the oppressive legacy of patriarchy which defines human nature endocentrically (Graham cited in Osmer 2008:154).

However, over and above, the study is not disputing or disregarding the importance of the traditional Zulu culture of ritualistic performances and other cultural symbols. These concepts have the ability to define the essence of who the Zulu nation is, and as a result, they need to be affirmed and appreciated. Rather, the study is merely highlighting the fact that divorced women are not the social “other”. But they are part of the larger whole. They are full and active members of the society, and they deserve to be treated as such. This is an ethnographic study. An ethnography is particularly convenient, and thus suitable for gaining an understanding of the complexities of a particular socio-cultural group (Leedy 2014:145). As a result, the study intended to uncover and disclose the reasons behind the socio-cultural as well as religious exclusion of the divorced Zulu women, which subsequently puts them in a disadvantageous position. The study also forms part of the indigenous research in a sense that, it looks into the collective worldviews of people that are encoded in language, folklore, myths, metaphors, taboos, and rituals (Chilisa 2012:131). Therefore, the study seeks to point out the fact that adjustments should be made to accommodate everyone because “while cultural norms and values are very important in our lives, but they are not absolute, as cultures are not static” (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:14).

### **6.3 Further Recommendations for Study**

The study reflected on the challenges that are faced by women after divorce. It therefore established that the hostile treatment and attitude is caused by the Zulu custom of using a kist as a traditional symbol for marriage. It is quite interesting that the significance as well as the symbolic meaning of the kist within the Zulu culture has been passed on from generation to generation. However, the researcher is also aware of the fact that this particular object is not an African invention, but a Western item. Therefore, this automatically raises a lot of questions.

Therefore, in developing the study further, the researcher would like to conduct an empirical research, as there is a need to explore the originality of the concept of the kist as traditional marriage symbol. In this regard, “pastoral care-givers should therefore liaise with cultural

leaders in the community to cooperate in terms of rites of passage, using stories, proverbs, riddles, and other appropriate means” (Louw 2008:186). They should also enter into a dialogue with cultural leaders in the community to develop new ways of understanding cultural symbols and their significance in building communities. There are several questions that need to be asked in this regard. Firstly, how did the Zulu culture adopted and came to embrace the kist as their cultural symbol for a marriage? Secondly, where did this notion of a cultural symbol for women come about or formulated, since there is nothing that stands to affirm the same stipulations for men? Thirdly, the researcher would also like to uncover which cultural symbol was initially used by the Zulu nation, before the conception and the subsequent adoption of the kist to sustain this tradition? Lastly, why did the concept of a marriage box became so popular within the Zulu culture and not in other African cultures?

As Thatcher (2011:18) rightly puts it that some of the traditional “beliefs and practices are so deeply embedded in ourselves and the various groups we belong to that we may never question them” (2011:18). It is quite interesting that Zulu women, both educated and uneducated, readily accept, celebrate and uphold the significance of the kist without questioning it.

## **Clarification of Concepts**

### **Theology**

This refers to the human reflection on God's relationship with humanity and the entire universe to gain understanding of who God is, and to discover his plan and purposes for his creation. In this sense, theology is not just "words," "texts," but life! Theology's goal is to give life and bring about transformation in a person's life (Nkansah-Obrempong 2007:1-2).

### **Church or congregation**

This can be understood as an 'organism' as opposed to an organisation. The church is a community of persons discovering personhood in brother-sisterhood relationships. It is an interlink network of sibling relationships, in which church functions as a family system with distributed power, shared functions of leadership, horizontal rather than vertical communication patterns, fraternal, rather than professional relationships (Augsburger cited in Miller 1981:9-10).

### **Culture**

This concept refers to the total way of life of a people. It comprises of certain elements, and the ideological, organising principles around which people view reality. This includes their way of thinking, feeling, believing, and behaving, art forms, symbols, language, aesthetics, etc. Culture then could be viewed as a symbolic system. It describes the conceptual world of people, the way they interpret and speak about reality (Nkansah-Obrempong 2007:2). It is this sense of culture that is applied in this study.

### **Practical Theology**

This is a term that is normally used in Christian theology. It "refers to a general way of doing theology concerned with the embodiment of religious beliefs in the day-to-day lives of individuals and communities" (Miller-MacLemore 2012:103).

### **Pastoral care**

According to Louw (1998:6-7), pastoral care is the theological theory classically known as *cura animarum*, which refers to the cure of souls. It can also be understood as the term that signifies caring for the believer in its therapeutic approach that denotes healing, sustaining,

guiding, reconciling, guiding, and nurturing. Pastoral care refers to the acts of concern, empathy, compassion, kindness, and love.

### **Counselling**

Counselling signifies the systemic understanding of the “soul” for the expansion of *cura animarum* into *cura vitae*; which refers to the illness and the healing of life. It can be understood as the interplay between being and affirmation within the realm of Christian spirituality which opens new avenues for pastoral therapy (Louw 2008).

### **Healing**

Healing is that what enables us to be fully human in relation to ourselves, our society as well as humanisation (de Gruchy cited in Louw 2009:54).

### **Ancestors**

In an African context, ancestors *amadlozi*, *izinyanya* or *abaphansi* refers to those who are departed. They play a significant role in an African Spirituality. Ancestors are believed to be the protectors of both life and of the whole community (Louw 2008:166).

### **Rituals**

These are explained as “ formal ceremonies, standard habits, or actions that express the beliefs and customs of people and congregations” (Hendriks, 2004:137).

### **Symbols**

Symbols are said to “represent something else; they evoke a complexity of meanings. They represent our association with a reality beyond the physical reality” (Hendriks, 2004:136).

### **Marriage**

According to the Christian tradition, marriage is a gift and a lifelong covenant, instituted by God between two people, but it can be dissolved in extreme circumstances (Miles 1999:85).

### **Divorce**

This refers to the legal dissolution of a socially and legally recognized marital relationship that alters the obligations and privileges of the two persons involved (Phiri 2009:58).

### **Stigma**

The term stigma comes from a Greek word, which originally meant to make a mark on someone, to use a brand, tattoo, or other mark to designate an undesirable person. It is also the source of the word stigmata, which is used to identify the nail marks in the palms of the resurrected Christ (Frosh 2002:28).

### **Discrimination**

According to the Oxford dictionary, the term discrimination denotes the act or practice of treating somebody or a group in society less fairly than others. It might be because of their sexual orientation, age, racial group, and or gender.

### ***Umabuy'ekwendeni***

This is a derogatory or offensive isiZulu language term, which is often used to refer to a female who has been married, but is now divorced therefore single.

### ***Untombifuthi***

This term in the Zulu language may generally be used to name a girl child, but in this sense, may be used offensively to refer to a woman who has been married, but is now divorced, and therefore she has become a 'young' maiden again.

### ***Isaliwakazi***

This isiZulu language word refers to a female who is perceived by the community as rejected or unlovable because she cannot find someone to marry her.

### ***Isishimane***

An offensive isiZulu language word referring to a man who cannot find a woman to love.

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